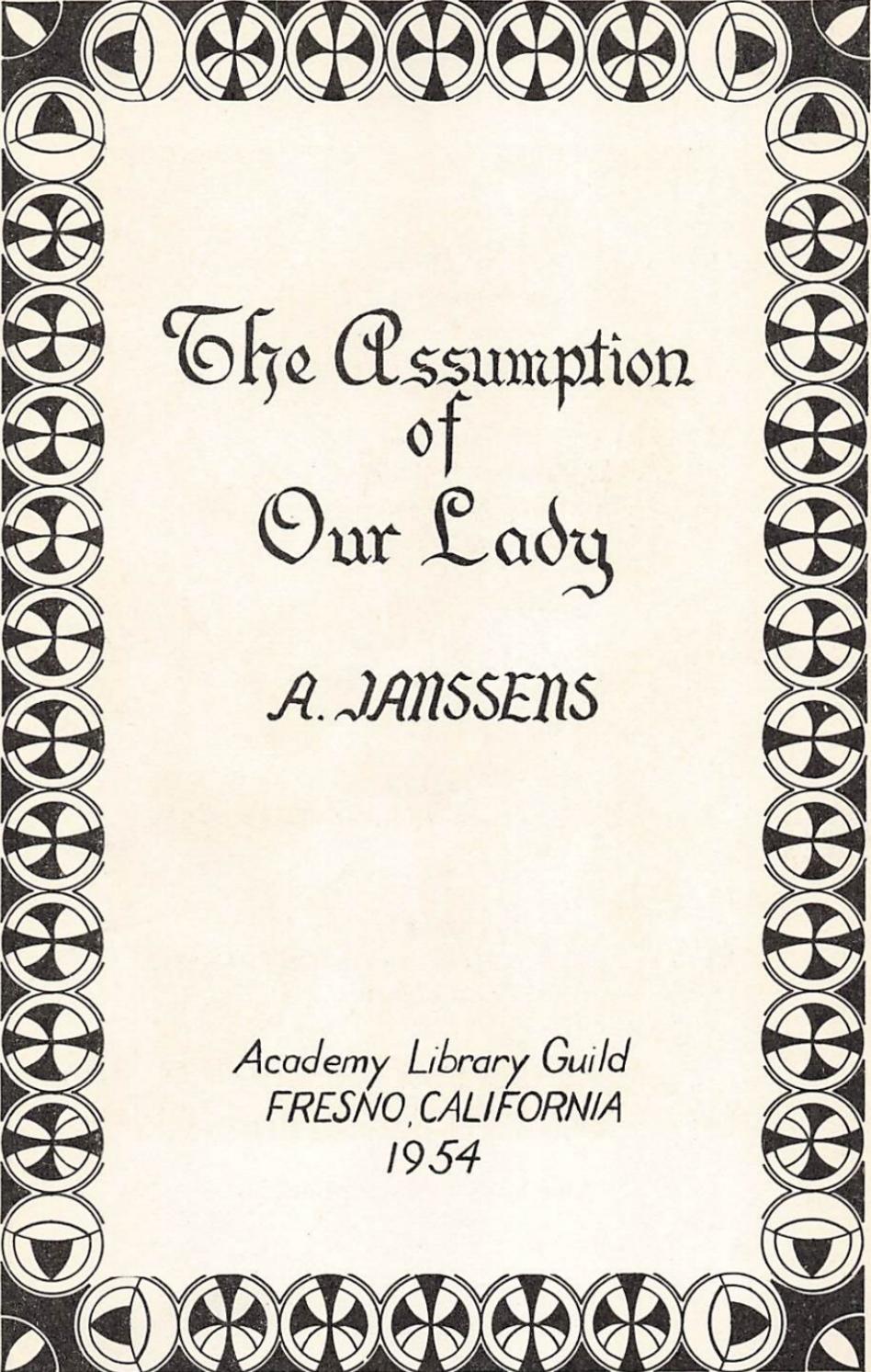


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The Assumption
of
Our Lady

A. JANSSENS

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The Assumption Of Our Lady



Our Lady's Assumption
Dürer

FOREWORD

On more than one occasion the wish has been uttered that on March 25 public and private veneration should give greater luster to the feast of the Annunciation. This feast honors the Mother of God, calling to mind her first appearance as Mediatrix, when she consented to the mysterious union of the divine Word with our humanity.

The divine motherhood is indeed the beginning and center of Mary's greatness. It was not death, says St. John Damascene, that sanctified the Blessed Virgin, but she has transformed death into joy; her death did not give her a new perfection or a greater certainty. St. Albert the Great writes: "It is a greater dignity to be the Mother of God by nature, than to become His son by adoption," so that, even during her life on earth, the humble Virgin was irradiated by a higher glory than are the elect of heaven.

We can easily understand why, for many centuries, Mary's assumption into heaven has become the most popular of all her feasts; for who would not rather inspect a masterpiece in its definitive completion? Mary's assumption is the ultimate coronation of her motherhood and of her position as second Eve in the decree of the redemption. Mary's life on earth, with its pure joys and profound sorrows, belongs to the past; but as Queen of the universe she lives and governs beside the throne of her divine Son.

In another book we have proved, to the best of our ability, that the doctrine of Mary's assumption did not originate in apocryphal and historically worthless narratives. In this study we summarize the inquiry for the reasons of the bodily glorification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We pose the question as it was posed, more than a thousand years ago, by Pseudo-Augustine, the pioneer of the

theology of the assumption: "Thus, what should be said about Mary's death, what about her assumption, matters which the Sacred Scriptures do not mention; what is in harmony with the truth? Let the very truth itself become authority (1)."

Conscious of the inadequacy of our powers and of many shortcomings in our work, we say with Pseudo-Augustine: "If, therefore, I have spoken as I should have, approve, O Christ, I beg Thou and Thine; but if I have spoken as I should not have done, do Thou and Thine pardon me (2)."

A. Janssens

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CHAPTER 1

The Theology of the Assumption

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

It would serve no useful purpose to underestimate the opposition that the doctrine of the corporal assumption of Mary into heaven has experienced, from the eighth century, when it was begun by Ambrosius Autpertus, till our present time. It would not be right to despise arguments that we do not accept and treat them as coming from enemies of the Blessed Virgin (1). In this matter a comparison can be drawn with the controversy concerning the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. For generations numerous theologians, guided by saints and ardent lovers of the Blessed Mother, such as St. Bernard, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, have either expressed their doubt about this privilege of the Mother of God or taught that she was conceived in sin. Since the Church proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception we can more and more appreciate the great merits of those who had conscientiously advanced their objections. By their very objections these dissenters helped to establish Mariology on a firmer basis, and helped greatly to have the problems concerning Mary defined in ever clearer wording and to have them answered convincingly.

No one should ever wonder or be scandalized when the history of theology relates the doubts of individual writers with regard to various theological questions. In the matter of Mary's Assumption there were also some who were in doubt. But, as Pope Benedict XIV correctly remarks, in theological disputes the opinion of one who doubts is less important than the affirmation of the other who knows and is certain. What every lover of Mary should rejoice to hear is the fact that with regard to her assumption one can hardly speak of real doubts or of real opponents. Not a single theologian of note has ever taught that Mary had indeed become a prey of corruption (2).

The point of view of so-called opponents can be understood without much difficulty. Some have expressed their

opposition in this way: Mary's Assumption is not impossible, but are there any positive proofs for the historical fact that Mary is bodily assumed into heaven? Others have asked: Why introduce as a definitely established doctrine that which at most is only probable? Still others thought: How can that which is not found in Sacred Scripture or universal tradition of antiquity ever be defined as an article of faith?

Some years ago, J. Ernst, D.D. treated in various theological publications, the definability of Mary's corporal assumption, which he accepted merely as a pious and probable opinion. His theory can be stated as follows:

The pious opinion concerning Mary's corporal assumption into heaven appears only after a lapse of many centuries. At the end of the fourth century, St. Epiphanius of Salamis, who was a careful investigator of traditions, had to declare that nothing was definitely known of Mary's death and burial. St. Ephraem and St. Jerome who died in the years 373 and 420, respectively, do not give any information about this matter. Other Fathers of the Church taught that Christ alone had risen from the dead and was bodily glorified. These witnesses of tradition counterbalanced the apocryphal narrative *De transitu Mariae*. Still less reliance should be placed on the **Historia Euthymiaca**, a narrative of the assumption, allegedly originating with Juvenalis of Jerusalem in the fifth century, but actually dating from the ninth or tenth. The Church of the eighth and ninth centuries, both in the East and in the West, acknowledged her ignorance in connection with Mary's death. The absence of a divine revelation is expressly mentioned in the **Historia Euthymiaca**. Under these circumstances Mary's corporal assumption could indeed have become the subject of a pious opinion, but not of a dogmatic faith. In fact, Scholasticism in its golden period never went beyond this point, but accepted the assumption of Mary merely as a pious and probable opinion. An appeal was made, it is true, to the ancient liturgies, and the **Sacramentarium Gregorianum** and the **Missale Gothicum** undoubtedly speak of a corporal assumption. But the truth remains that the appeal did not solve the problem. The Church has other feasts — and we may call to mind the Office of Our

Lady of Lourdes — for which she relies on human witnesses without guaranteeing these historical events with her infallible authority. Finally, the Sacred Scriptures relate nothing about Mary's assumption. As St. Thomas taught, only the literal sense can give a firm basis to a theological argument (3).

We may readily admit that, up to a point, Ernst is correct. The Church has never considered the existence of a historical tradition of this matter as definite and certain.

In 1913, C. Van Crombrugghe, a theologian of authority, wrote without hesitation:

Nevertheless, with the absence of explicit witnesses who are equipped with sufficient qualities of authenticity and antiquity, it is impossible, at the present standing of historical science, to demonstrate in a critical manner that the assumption of the Virgin is a fact taught by the Apostles as the witnesses of revelation or by the Doctors of the Church. The reasons we advanced, even taken collectively, convey only that an historical criticism does not oppose a truth when proved from another source, but that it confirms this truth to some extent (4).

At the end of the last century, another theologian of note, M. J. Scheeben admitted that in the historical tradition, prior to the end of the sixth or, at most, of the fifth century, not a single definite and explicit witness of noteworthy authority could be found to attest the fact that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven (5).

The error of Ernst lies in the incorrect representation of the status of the question and in his incorrect postulates.

Since Carolingian times there have been in the Western Church sober people who, because of the gaps in the historical tradition, decided to acquiesce in the presumption that the question would never be solved with certainty. As may easily be seen such a principle condemns the entire theological labor of the Church. As is evident the very same thing should be said of every article of faith which, in its own concept, is not explicitly contained in the Sacred Scriptures and in the tradition of the first four centuries?

The Carolingian theologians might have advanced an excuse which no longer held good after the **Liber de Assumptione** was written by Pseudo-Augustine. They had no way of knowing that the Eastern bishops of the eighth century,

and even earlier, had defended the assumption of Mary into heaven in a brilliant manner and with superb clarity.

In the theology of the assumption, Pseudo-Augustine played a decisive role. Associating himself with the Greek teachers, and supported by the liturgy, he transferred the question from the field of history to another domain, namely, that of dogmatic development, the explanation of the faith. This great merit of Pseudo-Augustine was rightly praised by the prince of theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas (6), but was woefully forgotten by J. Ernst.

Ernst seemed to premise the doctrine of the assumption as essentially dependent on a historical tradition. To Ernst the question is this: Is the assumption, as a historical fact, worthy of belief because of the authority of witnesses?

In the present condition of the historical documents, no answer to a question thus phrased could be forthcoming. It is true that in some apocryphal narratives the assumption of Mary is substantiated by the Apostles as eyewitnesses. For instance, a Syrian narrative calls on the testimony of St. John the Apostle and quotes him as saying: "We, the Apostles, who had beheld the sudden transition of her precious body, glorified God" (7). But such narratives have no historical value whatever, and do not clarify the question in any way. The concept of Mary's glorification is not centered about the transition, the journey of the Blessed Virgin into heaven. The thing to which the liturgies, the theologians, and the doctors refer, is something quite different. In the liturgy the idea is expressed as follows: "Through her assumption she who carried the author of life, did not experience the corruption of death. She was subjected to a temporal death, but could not have been restrained by the bonds of death" (8). St. Modestus of Jerusalem explained that "Alone amongst women stands Mary, the blessed (thus the curse pronounced over Adam and Eve passes to all human beings but ceases for Mary and Jesus); Mary shares in the glory of her Son whom she truly carried in her bosom and by whom her virginity was preserved without stain." Although, as the result of her divine motherhood, Mary's preservation from the consequences of the universal curse and of death supposes certain events that are perceptible by

themselves, such as her death, resurrection, and assumption, it is a fact that her permanent bodily incorruption, her participation in the kingdom of her Son and in the victory over death, do not belong to the events of our world (9). Even in the absence of a historical tradition concerning her death, resurrection, and assumption, it is quite possible that the complex of truth contained in the words "Mary's assumption into heaven" is revealed in another complex, that of Mary's motherhood, that is, in her position as second Eve in the plan of redemption.

The objection, that, even in its golden period, Scholasticism never went beyond accepting the assumption merely as a pious and probable opinion, is also inconclusive. Because, even if we accept that the grand old masters of theology did not defend Mary's assumption as a certain and definite fact, we may not exclude the possibility that in the course of time this doctrine may be accepted as certain, and be taught as such. In the supposition that this truth is revealed implicitly in another, as time goes on, the conclusive force of the advanced reasons can be felt more firmly, the conviction of the faithful can grow, and the voice of the teaching authority of the Church can become clearer. We need merely to call to mind the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

This growth and development from a pious opinion to a doctrine of faith is directly in line with Mariology. Mary's virginal motherhood, her inseparable relationship with the Redeemer, and all the things which divine revelation teaches concerning her, are so unique and so significant that only slowly did the Church realize the full import of these truths and come to know how to express them in correct wordings. Mary's corporal incorruption, her resurrection, and her final glory belong to the supernatural privileges of the Mother of God. Only as articles of faith can they be certain and probable. Although the real assent of faith is incompatible with the judgment of mere probability, we may expect that, also on this point, the Holy Spirit of God shall lead the faithful to the definite knowledge of revealed truth; so that the import of the powerful concepts of divine motherhood and of second Eve become clear to the consciousness of the Church.

We do not intend to write a history of the theology of the assumption. The following chapters will serve to state the method, and to present the arguments, of the best defenders of this doctrine. We shall begin with the most ancient patristic and liturgical sources known to us, in which Mary's assumption is proclaimed, that is with those sources dating back to the period from about the seventh to the twelfth centuries.

I. FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE TWELFTH CENTURY

1. Mary's body is not to be found on earth. Under one form or another homilists and theologians have expressed their conviction that the body of Mary cannot be found on earth. St. Andrew of Crete (10) emphatically relied on the empty tomb. For St. John Damascene (11), the empty grave is an unremitting proof of Mary's assumption. Ambrosius Autpertus, Ado, Radbertus, and others question the conclusive force of this argument.

2. Mary underwent death, but her death is a mystery owing to her singular elections as Virgin Mother (12). After the Fall, God decreed a fixed and unchangeable law: the law of universal death. Mary belongs to the human race; thus she died (13). The same thought was expressed in the Sacramentary of St. Gregory: "We know that because of her flesh she departed" (14); also by St. John Damascene (15), by Pseudo-Augustine, and by others (16). It seems that Pseudo-Augustine expressed rather well the common conviction based on theological grounds when he said:

"Mindful of the fact that Mary was human, we are not afraid to say that she underwent temporal death, which death also her Son, who is both God and man, sustained because of the law imposed on the human race: and this because as man He was conceived in and brought forth from her womb" (17).

Apart from this first reason, others have been developed to support Mary's death. Mary died in order to prove that the Incarnation of the Son of God took place not seemingly, but in reality, and that Christ was born of a human mother who was subject to the laws of nature (18). She should not have

escaped death, any more than her Son did (19). Death is the condition of incorruption inasmuch as the Lord subjected Himself to death and made His death a source of resurrection. (20).

3. Mary could not remain in the grip of death, because she is the mother of the true Life, the mother of the Son of God. Unlike other mortal beings she escaped the consequences of death; death had no dominion over her. Her death was a rapturous movement, as it were, whereby she is, also bodily, changed and deified (21). This conclusion is definitely expressed in various liturgical texts. St. Gregory wrote in his Sacramentary that "not even the bonds of death could restrain her" (22). The Gothic Missal reads: "Through her assumption she did not experience the corruption of death" (23).

This privilege is based on what the Catholic Church teaches concerning Mary's election, her divine motherhood, and her singular position in the economy of the redemption.

Pseudo-Augustine came to the following conclusion:

Would it therefore, be wrong (that is, does it not agree with the analogy of our faith?) if because of such great difference (as Mary so greatly surpasses all other human beings in that she is Virgin and mother, in that she brought forth without the pains of childbirth, and in that she remained inviolate in her virginity) we say that she, through whom God wished to be born and to share in the substance of the flesh, indeed underwent the death of the human race but was not restrained by the bonds of death (24)?

The divine motherhood is the beginning and the center of Mary's glory. He who is truly God was conceived by the Virgin and born of her in a manner both new and miraculous; the old order was changed, human nature was renewed, and the creature was restored to his former position (25). The body of Mary was raised above the ordinary laws of nature, and through this body the principle of Life was given us. This body, which conceived within itself the fullness of the life-giving Godhead, is living (that is, withdrawn from the consequences of death) and, therefore, a treasure of incorruption. This body was the earthly palace of the King of heaven, a heaven in itself (because God lived in it); in it the sanctifying covenant was concluded between

God and man; out of this virginal earth the Redeemer, the second Adam, was formed (26). Mary, the queen of the human race, stands alone in all things. She is indeed of the same nature as we are, but she is the most holy Virgin Mother. Is it, therefore, such a wonder that her death is more glorious than that of other human beings (27)? She is too great for the tomb to retain her body (28). She who carried Life within herself, will not be conquered by death (29).

Blessed is the death of God's servants, because by their death their love is confirmed, and safeguarded against the instability of their weak will. We call them blessed after their death, mindful of the words of the Sacred Scriptures in which we are admonished not to call anyone blessed before his death. But God did not wait until Mary died to give her, her blessedness; for she was completely holy and confirmed in God's love before her death. The beginning, the center, and the end of all her privileges, the confirmation and preservation of her union with God, are rooted in her virginal conception, in the indwelling of the Godhead in her maternal womb, and in her virginal childbearing. It was not death that made her blessed; she transformed death into joy (30). She stood above the whole of creation and she received dominion over all created things, because she is the Mother of God who called all things into being and who governs all things (31). She was the spiritual paradise of the new Adam, for, out of this Virgin and out of this virgin earth God's Son had made himself man. Mary who was mortal, obtained her immortality by her divine Motherhood. She who was a spiritual heaven, was assumed into the heavenly mansions. For, was she not greater than the heavens, the holy Mother of God in whom the Creator became a child? How could she who had brought forth the Conqueror of death, who had brought forth true Life, have been subject to the laws of death (32)?

The reasoning of the ancient theologians is tersely summarized in the ancient liturgy of the assumption:

"She who had given birth to the incarnate Son our Lord, from herself, was indeed subjected to a temporal death but could not have been restrained by the bonds of death . . .

through her assumption she who carried the author of life, did not experience the corruption of death."

4. The curse pronounced by God over Adam and Eve did not pass to Mary, the new Eve, the blessed among women. Among women Mary alone is the blessed; thus the curse of paradise passes on to all human beings but is withheld from Mary and Jesus; she should share in the glory of her Son, whom she so truly carried in her womb and by whom her virginity was preserved immaculate. Through Mary, mankind is restored in body and soul; through her, mankind is glorified and venerated in Christ, the God-man, by the angels; through her, mankind is redeemed from the slavery of the devil; through her, the universe is renewed and the earth is united with heaven. (All this supposes that the holy Mother of God is not subject to the law of sin with its consequences) (33).

Through Mary, Christ reconciled man with God (34) and redeemed the world from the corruption of death (35). If the Son of God had not assumed flesh from Mary, we all would have fallen prey to eternal death. She delivered us from the shame which Eve had brought on us. Eve is the mother of dust, Mary that of Light. That which is born of Eve is subject to corruption; that which is born of Mary is incorruptible. The body of the earthly Eve went back to dust, Mary is the Mother of Life and returned to the true Life (36).

In olden times, God banished our first ancestors from paradise because of their disobedience; why then would paradise not receive her now who is free from all vice, who brought forth the seed of all obedience, and who caused life to begin for all men. Eve, who listened to the serpent, was sentenced and condemned with Adam: she would bring forth her children in sorrow, and after her death, return to the earth out of which she was taken. Mary who listened to the word of God, conceived without the intervention of man, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and she brought forth without sorrow. How could death conquer her? How could she return to dust? How would corruption attack her body? Christ said: "Where I am, there also shall my minister be" (John 12:26). And His Mother, would she not be with Him? As she has brought forth without sorrow, so her death is

also without sorrow. Sin, the sting of death, was killed in her; and, because of it, a more lasting and better life begins with her (37).

In closer connection with the letter of the Sacred Scriptures Pseudo-Augustine makes a distinction between the curse which was passed on our first ancestor (Gen. 3:19) and the sentence which was passed on Eve (Gen. 3:16). For that reason his reasoning runs into other channels.

From the virginal birth he deduces the principle that the Blessed Virgin is excepted from some of the universal laws, and that nothing prevents us from accepting the fact that she need not come under the law of corruption. Pseudo-Augustine finds positive reasons for Mary's incorruption and assumption in the law which commands that the child shall honor its parents, and the saying that Jesus' flesh is Mary's flesh.

5. Mary's incorruption, resurrection, and assumption are required by the law that commands the Son to honor His Mother. This view is found in St. Modestus of Jerusalem (38), in the Gothic Missal, in St. Andrew of Crete (39), St. John Damascene (40), Pseudo-Augustine (41), and in all theologians of the Latin Church.

Some of the ancient Doctors advanced other arguments, for example: (a) From the assumption of Elias and Henoch. If Elias and Henoch were bodily taken from this world, St. Andrew of Crete exclaimed: "How much more credible is such a privilege for the body of Mary!" (b) From the antedated resurrection of the saints, as related in Matthew 27:53, Mary's resurrection was taken for granted (42).

A systematic treatise on Mary's assumption is found, for the first time, in Pseudo-Augustine, but the principles and conclusions that this pious and unusually keen theologian unfolds, are not new, but are scattered throughout the liturgical documents and the homilies of the Greek Fathers.

The apocryphal narratives and, in particular, the negative tradition stating that Mary's body could not be found on earth, gave rise to all the theological speculations concerning the question of Mary's assumption into heaven. Further studies and pious reflections of Mary's election as Mother of God, of her singular relationship with her Son, and of her

unique position in the work of redemption, have established this negative tradition on a positive basis. No, it could not be that the Mother of God, the Mother of the Word incarnate, the Mother of the Redeemer, the new Eve, should have remained in the clutches of death. From the beginning this conviction found a definitive formula in St. John Damascene (43) and in the ancient liturgy, reading: "She who from herself had given birth to Thy Incarnate Son our Lord, could not have been restrained by the bonds of death."

Abelard, Peter of Celle, Alanus of Ryssel, Absalon of Springkirchbach, Hildebert Cenomanensis, and other defenders of Mary's assumption from the Middle Ages appealed to the authority of this liturgical formula and expressed, at the same time, their agreement with the theological argument that is contained in these words.

We shall now present the reasoning of some of the best theologians who, since the twelfth century, studied in full detail the question of Mary's assumption. In this way we shall obtain a true picture of the development through which this doctrine proceeded.

II. THE REASONING of ST. ALBERT the GREAT

In his *Mariale*, after formulating very clearly the question, Was the Blessed Virgin assumed immediately into heaven, body and soul, St. Albert the Great represents the difficulties prevailing in his time (44). These difficulties are three.

1. In the sermon of Jerome "*Cogitis me, O Paula*," there appears: "Many of us doubt" (45).

2. Pseudo-Augustine declared: "This is indeed the true sentiment about the assumption: we must believe that Mary has been raised above the angels, but we do not know whether she has been assumed into heaven in her body or without her body" (46). St. Jerome added to it: "Human judgment should not pass for certain that which God wished to keep hidden" (that is, that which God has not revealed) (47).

3. He who has a share in the guilt, has also a share in the punishment. All have sinned in Adam; therefore, all should be punished in their sin or because of their sin. To this

punishment belongs the return to dust: "... dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19). The conclusion is drawn that all who are born in sin, should decay bodily.

According to the opinion of St. Albert, Mary's bodily assumption into heaven is an obvious truth. He writes:

"For these and many other reasons and authorities it is evident that the most Blessed Mother of God is assumed, body and soul, above the choirs of the angels. And by all means we believe this to be true."

He gives twelve reasons for this statement:

1. In the Collects of the Sacramentary of St. Gregory there appears: "She who from herself had given birth to our Lord Jesus Christ, could not have been restrained by the bonds of death." These bonds of death could mean nothing else than the return to dust.

St. Albert reasons that the meaning of "She could not have been restrained by the bonds of death" is, that she could not have decayed. And that, unless she had immediately been raised from the dead, she would have decayed as other bodies. Therefore, she truly rose from the dead.

2. Mary was prefigured by the Ark of the Covenant which was made from imperishable wood. Therefore, she rose without any decomposition.

3. Psalm 131:8 reads: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark, which thou hast sanctified." In a figurative manner this is said of the Blessed Virgin, whose body was the ark of the body of Christ.

4. The authority of St. Augustine (48) from whom, among others, the following text is quoted: "It is meet that the throne of God, the abode of the Lord, the house and tabernacle of Christ be wherever He is. For it is more meet that such a precious treasure be kept in heaven than on earth."

5. The authority of St. Dionysius and that of St. Maximus.

6. The authority of St. Bernard, under whose name four texts are quoted:

It was not fitting for Him to leave the body of His Mother on earth without honor, since He had made the honor of parents one of the commandments (49).

If the soul of a child who was not yet born, melted the moment Mary spoke, one can imagine the exultation of the heavenly citizens who had

merited to hear her voice, see her face, and enjoy her blessed presence (50).

There is on earth no worthier place than the virginal temple in which Mary received the Son of God, nor is there in heaven a worthier place than the royal throne to which the Son of Mary elevated Mary (51).

It is time to tell all flesh about the assumption into heaven of the Mother of the Word incarnate; human mortals must never cease their praises because the nature of man has been raised above the immortal spirits through the Virgin Mary (52).

7. From Pseudo-Augustine (53) St. Albert quotes arguments drawn from Mary's stainlessness, her divine Motherhood, and her singular holiness. With Pseudo-Augustine, he puts the question:

"What other place should one consider worthier for the mother than that in the presence of her Son?" (54) and adds this to it: "Things of the same nature occupy the same place. Thus, if the Son and the Mother are of the same nature, it is necessary that the Mother be with the Son."

Thus far his reasoning has been from authority. It ends as follows:

"See, according to the testimony of Pope Gregory, of two bishops, Augustine and Dionysius, of one abbot, Bernard, and even of two Apostles, Peter and James (55), it is probable that in a most glorious manner the Blessed Virgin was assumed into heaven, body and soul."

8. Now follows the theological reasoning. This is evident from reason.

In sin, a distinction should be made between the aversion from the unchangeable good, and the turning to transitory goods. A different punishment corresponds to each one; because the soul has turned away from its true life, it must be separated from the body of which it is the life; because it turned to that which has no being, *ex conversione ad nihilum*, it must return to nothing, that is, to dust. Due to original sin, the Blessed Virgin was turned aside from the true life, and for that reason she should have died; but as she actually never had turned to something transitory, *nunquam fuit conversa actualiter ad aliquod nihilum*, she could not have returned to dust.

9. As St. Anselm says: "If a thing is befitting to God

and if a greater reason does not contradict that fittingness, it follows as a foregone conclusion that whatever is befitting is also necessary.

10. What was granted to others as a privilege, should, with greater reason, be given to Mary. From the Sacred Scriptures we know that many bodies of deceased saints have risen from the dead. (Matt. 27:52) Thus Mary also is risen.

11. As Dionysius says: All privileges of the less belong in a more excellent manner to the greater. This holds also for Mary's resurrection.

12. The Church herself reasons in this way when she commemorates Mary's birth. The argument of the Church runs as follows: John the Baptist was sanctified in the womb of his mother; thus also the Blessed Virgin. I have, therefore, the right to reason a *simili*: others have risen; thus also Mary.

In conclusion, St. Albert the Great gives an answer to the premised objections. He remarks that some truths are explicitly contained in the Sacred Scriptures and that we accept these as divine truths without further research. On the other hand, there are opinions without foundation, such as those that are based on an apocryphal authority or which are supported by merely doubtful arguments. But between that which is absolutely certain and that which is doubtful there are:

1. Such opinions that are not explicitly contained in the Sacred Scriptures and that cannot be proved by convincing arguments, and that are not self-evident; but opinions that, one thinks, follow from the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, or can be reasoned out with a semblance of argument for or against. These may be held as opinions, for instance, answers to the questions: were all things created at the same time?; or, were the angels created in the state of grace?

2. Such matters that are not explicitly mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, and that are not self-evident; but because they can be deduced from the Sacred Scriptures or by virtue of advanced arguments, are so probable that nothing from the Sacred Scriptures or from theological reasoning can

be advanced against them. And these should be piously believed (56).

In this manner, St. Albert thinks, the contradiction is to be explained between Pseudo-Jerome and Pseudo-Augustine. According to St. Albert:

Jerome, who was the interpreter of the Bible, spoke as an interpreter who did not wish to insert anything which was not expressed in the Bible. But as an investigator and as one who explains, Augustine depicts or substitutes not so much those things which form the principles of knowledge, as those which necessarily follow, as long as they are not against reason, or against authority.

In comparison with the reasonings of the Greek Fathers of the Church and with that of Pseudo-Augustine, the reasoning of St. Albert the Great is less satisfactory. Of his arguments taken from authority there are some that do not possess a fully conclusive force (2 and 3); others are based on the opinion of individual Doctors (4, 5, 6, and 7), among whom are two pseudonyms (Dionysius and Augustine) and a (presumably) not genuine text of St. Bernard. But, as all his predecessors of the Latin Church, St. Albert points to the contents of the **Liber de Assumptione** of Pseudo-Augustine and implicitly follows this splendid reasoning. Correctly he places first the appeal to the liturgy.

The value of his theological reasoning is not unassailable. For instance, in his ninth argument, the minor remains without proof; in his tenth argument it should be established that the saints who rose from the dead were assumed into the heavenly glory, body and soul; the eleventh argument presupposes that other saints have risen into glory, something which precisely has to be proved; the twelfth argument is based on the same unproved postulate. There remains his first and principal theological argument (the eighth of his series):

“Because of original sin the Blessed Virgin was turned away, from the true life, and for that reason she should have died; but as she actually never turned to something transitory, **ad aliquod nihilum**, she could not have returned to dust.”

But how does this prove that the Blessed Virgin was preserved from incorruption? St. Albert is of the opinion

that sin is divisible as to its punishment: (1) because through sin the sinner turns away, or is turned, from the unchangeable good, he is subject to the law of death; and for that reason Mary died; (2) because the sinner turns to a transitory thing, he must return to dust, that is, because of his conversion to nothing, he incurs the necessity of returning to something which is as nothing, namely, dust. The Blessed Virgin who actually never had turned to a transitory thing, could, therefore, not have suffered the corruption of her body.

This reasoning is indeed a striking example of the confusion which was caused by an erroneous opinion of many Doctors of the Middle Ages; this opinion was unknown in antiquity, that is, that the Blessed Virgin should have been conceived in original sin (57). We have seen that the more ancient Greek Fathers, and also the liturgy, explain the reason for Mary's death in a different way. Therefore there is something lacking in the assumptions of St. Albert the Great. Even the reason he gives for the incorruption of Mary's body is questionable. For, if everyone who never had turned to transitory things, is preserved from corruption, neither should those children who die immediately after baptism suffer bodily decay.

The ancient Fathers taught that Mary died because of the condition of her flesh, **pro conditione carnis**, but that she escaped the consequences of death, and did not remain in the grasp or under the dominion of death; in other words, to her, death was not a punishment.

More happy is the reasoning of St. Albert when, dwelling on the "blessed" among women, he says that Mary was safeguarded against every curse, and for that reason against decay:

She was without the woe common to all men, without the woe particular to women, and without the woe proper to mothers. Because of sin every human being incurs a triple woe in his body: in that, first, the body looses its flesh, is plagued by a possible derangement of its functions, and suffers from an irregularity of its natural appetites; second, before death, there is an incompatibility between body and soul inasmuch as the flesh wars against the spirit; and third, after death, the body suffers decay. In Genesis 3:17 ff., we read of this triple woe: "Cursed is the

earth in thy work," and so forth. The curse of our works indicates the irregularity of the natural appetites; the thorns and thistles point to the war against the spirit; the labor and sweat indicate the distemper or the derangement of our corporal functions; the return to dust denotes the decay of the body. The most Blessed Virgin was free from this triple bodily curse; her body was at peace with her spirit in all things, and should never have to return to dust (58).

III. THE REASONING of ST. PETER CANISIUS

In his great work, *De Maria Virgine Deipara*, St. Peter Canisius wrote in detail about Mary's death and assumption into heaven (59). He recalls to mind that our ancestors would not have suffered death, if they had not sinned. God had granted them the gift of immortality, so that they were safeguarded against the law of death. By their transgression of the divine commandment, our ancestors were condemned to death and to return to dust. Not because of the law of nature, as God had not made any death a law for mankind, but because of sin, which the justice of God avenges, death came on Adam and his whole posterity (60). The judgment, *Dust thou art into dust thou shalt return*, is universal: it concerns the whole human race.

As a daughter of Adam, Mary inherited from mortal parents a mortal nature, and with it all the corresponding conditions of life, a mortal nature and condition. She, therefore, died, and her death is the irrefutable proof that she was a true human being. She should, moreover, follow the example of her Son and by means of death reach her eternal glory. The theologians say, that even if Christ had not died a violent death, he would have suffered the law of death: "after a long old age he would have gone the way of all flesh, and he too would have been removed by the laws of death."

With full right the Church celebrates yearly in her liturgy the temporal death of Mary.

Someone may advance the objection that if death is a punishment of sin, why was Mary not freed from this severe punishment, as she had never committed any sin? St. Canisius answers that the deaths of the saints are blessed, reveal the glory of God, allow the saints to acquire new merits, and serve as examples for others. Although Mary

had never committed any sins, she remained the daughter of our ancestor Adam, in whom the whole human race had fallen. Due to this fact, she could not escape the punishment of sin, and her death should serve to glorify God. "She could not escape this punishment of death which God had decreed for all the children of Adam, and her very death itself should glorify God" (61). The human body is by nature corruptible. Thus, by her death, Mary paid the debt of nature.

Concerning the circumstances of her death, St. Canisius gives a detailed narrative based, in substance, on Areopagitus, the **Historia Euthymiaca**, Damascene, and Nicephorus Callistus. He is incorrect in his opinion that these writers are independent of the apocrypha. He writes:

Juvenalis, Damascene, Nicephorus, Metaphrastes affirm, without any apparent doubt, that the Apostles were assembled in a miraculous manner in Jerusalem, from the various places where they were preaching Christ, in order to be present at Mary's death, but they present the whole matter in such a way that they seem to rely not on any apocryphal writings but on a true and established tradition.

Mary's resurrection and bodily glorification are pious persuasions of the Church that are raised above almost all doubt:

The Church is in no great doubt about the matter, and is certainly piously convinced . . . that after her death Mary was bodily risen, and was vested with blessed immortality, and was given the blessedness also of her body, so that, together with her soul, her body could reverently and triumphantly enter into the kingdom of heaven (62).

St. Canisius advances two arguments to support this pious opinion of the Church. His first reason is based on the authority of more ancient writers, and his second reason on that of theological reflections and texts from the Sacred Scriptures.

In his first argument, the following Doctors are quoted: Dionysius the Carthusian, Antoninus of Florence, St. Thomas, St. Albert the Great, Hugo of St. Victor, St. Bonaventure, Durandus, Richard of St. Victor, St. Bernard, St. Briget, St. Amadeus of Lausanne. Of the Greek Fathers he quotes: Nicephorus Callistus, Michael Glycas, Cosmas Hymnographus, St. Andrew of Crete, Metaphrastes, St. Germanus of Constantinople, St. John Damascene, Juvenalis of

Jerusalem (63), Emperor Leo the Wise, and St. Athanasius (64). He makes further reference to the liturgical texts of the Greek and Latin Church, and again to the meaning of the name "Assumption."

The second argument develops these reasons:

1. In Psalm 131:8, "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark, which thou has sanctified," the prophet foretells the bodily glorification of Christ and Mary. In this manner the text is explained by Nicephorus Callistus and by Michael Glycas.

2. Psalm 44:10, "The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing," must be understood as referring to Mary's bodily assumption into heaven, according to the explanation of St. Athanasius, who is Pseudo-Athanasius, Glycas and Amadeus of Lausanne.

3. The divine law prescribes that the child shall honor its parents. One, therefore, piously believes that Jesus has safeguarded His Mother against decay, as St. Augustine, that is, Pseudo-Augustine, says.

4. Without a doubt, Mary is excepted from the curse pronounced against women (Gen. 3), since she gave birth to her child without pain.

"Wherefore we hold it foreign to the same goodness of God, that He should not have exempted His Mother from another curse, whereby, according to the universal law (Dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return), human beings are given over to decay and dust."

St. Canisius quoted this reflection from Pseudo-Augustine.

5. According to a theological rule, those privileges should be ascribed to Mary that had been granted to other saints. The Sacred Scriptures teach that Henoch was translated into paradise and Elias was assumed into heaven.

If Henoch was taken aloft and Elias was carried up in a heavenly chariot while their bodies remained alive and unimpaired due to God's working in them in a miraculous manner, why do we doubt that after Mary died from infirmity, she was revived by the power of God and her body did not see corruption? St. Andrew of Crete argued in the same manner.

St. Matthew the Evangelist mentions the saints who rose

from the dead with Christ. Several Fathers hold as certain that these risen saints were bodily assumed into heaven. We should accept the same privilege for Mary.

According to an opinion held by many Fathers, St. John the Evangelist rose immediately after his death, to an immortal life, and was assumed bodily into heaven. Why, then, should we not credit Mary also with this privilege?

Further reasoning is unnecessary, as the arguments of Pseudo-Augustine are sufficiently solid. He wrote (65): "Why should I dwell longer on this matter when one Augustine furnishes many and strong arguments which he supports with texts from the Sacred Scriptures, so that there seems to be nothing more required to add to this question of Mary's corporal translation into heaven?"

Dionysius the Carthusian says that it was fitting for Christ to do the greatest honor to His most worthy Mother, not only in her soul but also in her body. For, from this most pure body the Son of God formed His own body and raised it to the hypostatic union. It was not fitting that this most sacred body should fall into decay on earth, or lie somewhere incorrupt, unknown, and without honor.

In other words: Christ could glorify Mary's body because He is omnipotent; He willed to do it because by this last benefaction He desired to indicate His great love for Mary.

St. Peter Canisius took up the matter of refuting the objections against this thesis.

The first objection was that all that which is said about Mary's assumption is based on the apocrypha, which are condemned by Pope Gelasius.

The answer of St. Peter Canisius is that that which the apocrypha narrates is not necessarily untrue, and that the numerous Fathers whom he quotes, do not exclusively depend on the apocrypha and are not condemned by anyone.

The second objection is that Jerome acknowledges his ignorance concerning Mary's assumption into heaven (66).

St. Peter Canisius answers that some ascribe this letter to Sophronius of Jerusalem, and that recently the Roman Church left this passage out of the Breviary and replaced it with lessons from Athanasius and Damascene, who both proclaim her bodily assumption. Jerome, whoever he may

be, does not deny this privilege of Mary; he merely has doubts about it. There is not a single reason left for refusing to agree with Pseudo-Augustine (67), whose reasoning is irrefutable.

The third objection is that this much should be acknowledged: the Church does not prescribe or proclaim anything definite for our belief with regard to Mary's assumption.

The answer of Canisius is: "I grant you that that which the Church proposes for our belief is not all of one and the same nature. Some articles are proposed as definite and elucidated dogmas, from which no one may deviate without falling into godlessness. Others have the force of law through the silent approval of the faithful and the long-established usage of the Church. The latter articles cannot be gainsaid without rashness."

There are Catholics, says St. Peter Canisius, who are afraid to speak about Mary's bodily assumption, or to proclaim it. They dare not speak of an assumption and prefer to call the feast "Dormition," as if the feast recalls only Mary's death.

Canisius finds fault with this attitude, for, in the course of centuries, the wisdom of the Church grew under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. He who does not accept Mary's assumption into heaven, contradicts the most famous Fathers of the Church, and separates himself, not without danger, from the universal belief in such articles and also from their profession, whereas their profession already has the force of law.

Canisius developed the argument of authority with a wide reading that was amazing for his time. Numerous Greek writers are quoted, who, to the teachers of the thirteenth century, were as yet absolutely unknown. With his appeal to liturgy of both East and West, and to the concurring opinion of so many Fathers, Canisius opened up new avenues; he correctly indicates the mind of the Church and the universal acceptance of the properties of faith, *sensus Ecclesiae* and *communis bonorum credulitas*.

The theological reasoning of Canisius is not based on a personal study. He merely quotes the reasons which he found in books. Apart from the solid reflections, taken

from Pseudo-Augustine and Dionysius the Carthusian, Canisius has other reasonings based on the texts of the Sacred Scriptures, with a *simili* and a *fortiori* conclusions, which hinder, rather than help, the cause of the reasoning.

IV. THE REASONING of SUAREZ

Suarez wrote a remarkable disputation about Mary's death and her assumption into heaven (68). Without a moment's hesitation, he acknowledges that not a single historical witness is to be found for Mary's death. Yet, there is no doubt about the fact that Mary died. For such is the common feeling of the Church; and the teaching of the Sacred Scriptures should suffice to produce certainty on this point. All the descendants of Adam are subject to death, and there is nothing which compels us to make an exception to this rule for the Blessed Virgin. It was befitting that Mary should share in the lot of her Son, who underwent death. It proves that she was in need of redemption by Christ's death and that she had a body which was susceptible to suffering. Death itself has not a single imperfection against which the Blessed Virgin should have been safeguarded; death is a punishment which, when accepted for God's sake, merits an increase of grace. Concerning the manner of Mary's death, one may accept with probability that she died with neither sickness nor pain, because of the strength of her love, her burning desire, and her complete surrender to the eternal vision. He writes:

"For, it can happen that, in its actions, the soul is occupied so effectively and so energetically that it forgets, as it were, the body, so that, little by little, the functions of the body abate and withdraw, and in the end, because of their defect, the soul cannot be held within the body."

Shortly after her death, Mary rose and was assumed into the heavenly glory, body and soul. Suarez writes: "Thus thinks the universal Church; and in this matter her unanimity originates in the tradition of the ancient Fathers."

Suarez doubts about the genuineness of the homilies or treatises on the assumption which are known by the names of Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome, and Sophronius. But, genuine or not, these words carry great authority. For

they were undoubtedly written by famous men who were shining examples of piety, learning, and antiquity (69). He appeals to Damascene, Andrew of Crete, and Juvenalis, and again to all the saints and Doctors of later date.

A second argument is the very ancient feast of the Assumption. There is no reason to uphold the opinion of Ado and Usuardus, who say that the feast commemorates the dormition of Mary, as if it were no concern of ours where the body of the Virgin is now.

Suarez writes: "This is clearly contrary to the universal mind of the Church, as it is evident from the mind and words of all the faithful both simple and learned, and from the inscription of the Roman martyrology and the Missal; it is evident also from the Introit of the Mass, the antiphons and verses of the Office of that day, in which it is often repeated that Mary was assumed into heaven."

It is improbable that by these words is meant merely the assumption of the soul. A local ascension can be said only of the body. The souls of other saints have ascended into heaven and yet, the Church does not celebrate their assumption.

As do his predecessors, Suarez bases his theological reasoning on those reasons that are found in Pseudo Augustine and Damascene.

"The reasons which should prove this truth are accurately indicated by the Fathers quoted, especially by Augustine and Damascene."

He reduces, most correctly, the usually quoted texts from the Sacred Scriptures to a pious accommodation. He writes:

"And some texts from the Sacred Scriptures which are piously applied to this mystery, refer to it only incidentally."

He develops the following proofs:

1. As the body of Christ is taken from the body of the Virgin, both could be called, in some way, one body; so that Christ could say: "From this flesh is my flesh." And as it was befitting that the body of Christ should be free from decay, so it was also befitting that the body of the Virgin Mother enjoyed the same privilege.

2. Christ promised that wherever He is, there also His servant shall be. In a singular manner the Blessed Virgin

served Christ by giving Him His body from her own blood and by feeding Him with her own milk. For that reason too, Christ's promise is fulfilled in her in a singular manner and, where Christ is, there she too, glorified in body and soul governs with Him.

3. As Pseudo-Augustine says, it is not to be believed that the body from which God took His body, should have fallen a prey to decay and should have returned to dust. Or shall we say that Mary's body remained sound and whole and is hidden somewhere on this earth? But if that is so, it is difficult to believe that God would allow His Church to know nothing about it and that such a sacred body should remain unhonored (70).

4. In a certain sense, the body of the Blessed Virgin was the beginning of mankind's salvation, since from her blood the body and blood of Christ were taken, which became the price of our redemption. It is only reasonable that the same body of the Virgin should have a singular share in the redemption and, for that reason, should immediately obtain glory and immortality.

5. In a certain sense, too, the Son owed this honor to His Mother, and the Bridegroom to His Bride. As Solomon placed his mother on a special throne at his right hand, so Christ, who governs in heaven, has done the same for His Mother.

6. According to a probable opinion, St. John the Evangelist is bodily risen and glorified; probable also is the opinion that those who rose with Christ, are in the heavenly glory, body and soul.

Suarez writes: "Therefore, about the body of the Blessed Virgin this is not only probable, but also certain" (71).

7. The souls of the blessed long for the glory of their bodies, and beseech God for that glory. As long as the desire of the blessed in this matter is not completely fulfilled, they are wanting an accidental completion of their happiness. Likewise Mary's soul had this desire; and it was befitting that her desire was fulfilled so that her happiness would be complete.

If she asked for this favor, she was answered immediately, because of her singular worthiness and, as it were, by virtue of her motherly right.

8. This privilege reflects honor on God and Christ and fits in with the worthiness of Mary, her sinlessness, her purity, and her love. She who was preserved from original sin and was so far removed from all that which stains the soul, must not, as others, wait for the resurrection. Suarez writes: "There is nothing contrary to this truth; if we accept that other privileges had been granted to the Virgin Mother of God, we must grant her this one too without any doubt."

Suarez also investigates how far Mary's assumption should be regarded as a definite truth. Pseudo-Jerome, Suarez answers, considers the assumption of Mary as doubtful, and Pseudo-Augustine defends this doctrine "with almost the same reverence." Abulensis (72) calls this doctrine a probable opinion; Cajetan, a pious opinion; and Scotus speaks in about the same sense. Cajetan adds to the doctrine: to deny this privilege is insolent recklessness; Corduba is of the same opinion. Suarez says:

In his Fourth book against Cajetan and also in his work about the Conception, Catharinus contends that it is a matter of faith. This is not really so, because it is not defined by the Church, no witness for it can be found in the Sacred Scriptures, nor is it based on a sufficient tradition which may make it an infallible article of faith. At present this thought is accepted in such wise that it can not be doubted by anyone, pious and Catholic, nor be denied without temerity; and for that reason it seems to have that degree of certainty which another truth has, namely, the sanctification of Mary in her mother's womb.

Thus Suarez puts the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption on the same level. Suarez refers to his treatise on the Immaculate Conception (73), in which he investigates both the certainty and the definability of this doctrine.

About the certainty of the Immaculate Conception, Suarez has the following theses.

1. The Immaculate Conception is not defined by the Church, and consequently, the opinion championed by us, is not an article of faith, is not *de fide*. From the Council of Trent and from the decrees of Popes Sixtus IV and Pius V, it is evident that such an article of faith does not exist. As for the Council of Basel, properly speaking, this synod did not proclaim an explicit article of faith; and, for that matter,

this synod was wanting in infallible authority (74). Even from the liturgical feast it can be concluded that the Immaculate Conception has the same certainty as the one which we obtain from the canonization of a saint: for, the very Pope who approved of this feast of the Immaculate Conception, declared that he advanced this opinion merely as pious and more probable. This is sufficient matter for the celebration of the feast in a pious mood and without any danger, because the feast finds its main reason in the holiness of the blessed Virgin; the circumstance of the time of her sanctification is purely accidental as a pious opinion.

2. To oppose the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin cannot really be regarded as rash and impious. For, Popes Sixtus IV and Pius V have declared that such is not a mortal sin.

Suarez writes: "If this opinion were rash and impious, although the matter is very grave, it would be a mortal sin to defend it."

Again, because the opinion which opposes the Immaculate Conception has champions of authority, and is based on such reasons as, at least in former times, allowed the opinion some probability; yes, even in our day, it can be regarded as tolerable and probable.

3. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception coincides more with reason, with the teaching of the Fathers, and with the teaching authority of the Church. Suarez writes:

And therefore, at this time, I consider this way of thinking probable in such a degree that it can come within the extent of an opinion; because, actually, not only Pope Sixtus IV strongly favors that way of thinking whose decree the Council of Trent approves, but also the whole Church is strongly inclined toward it, with the result that a contrary opinion cannot be supported by any solid or sufficiently apparent reason.

According to the mind of Suarez, both doctrines, that is the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, are most probable. If one of these two opinions has a priority in certainty, the priority is surely in favor of that of Mary's assumption. For, the Immaculate Conception can be combatted "without rashness," something Suarez does not concede for the Assumption. Of the Immaculate Conception, he says that "the whole Church is inclined to accept this truth;" of

the Assumption, that it has been accepted to such an extent "that it cannot be drawn into doubt by anyone, pious and Catholic" (75).

To the question, whether the doctrine of Mary's assumption can be defined by the Church, Suarez gives an indirect answer when he states the general question as to what is required for something to be defined by the Church (76).

Let us take the Immaculate Conception as an example. Sixtus IV, Pius V, and the Synod of Basel evidently presuppose in their decrees that the question at issue can be solved in one sense or another. This belief is also taught by Abulensis, and even Cajetan does not dare deny it.

Further, this truth is supernatural (in its origin, that is, it can only have come from divine revelation), and is of value to the Church and to the piety of the faithful. Without any new revelation, this truth can become clearer and more certain in the consciousness of the Church, so that there are on hand sufficient reasons for an article of faith, based on an implicit and silent revelation which in the course of time is more clearly represented. Suarez writes:

"And the matter can reach that state in which, without any new and explicit revelation, the Church has sufficient motives to define this truth, based on an implicit and silent divine revelation which sufficiently represents itself."

For, in the course of centuries, the Church has solved questions of the same nature without any new and explicit revelation, for example, questions about the virtues infused into the soul at baptism, the canonicity of some of the books of the Sacred Scriptures, and Mary's preservation from every venial sin. Again, no one doubts that other doctrines, as, for example, Mary's advanced resurrection, her assumption, and the holiness of her birth, can be defined. Suarez writes:

"For this definition it is sufficient that one or another supernatural truth is contained in tradition or in the Sacred Scriptures, so that, when the common consent of the Church grows, through which the Holy Ghost often explains traditions and declares the Sacred Scriptures, the Church finally can furnish her own definition which has the virtue of a

revelation for us because of the infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost."

To have something defined as a truth revealed by God, it is sufficient that it be contained implicitly in the Sacred Scriptures or in the dogmatic tradition of the Church. The full meaning of that which was implicitly revealed, is brought to light by the Holy Ghost who leads the Church in the growing realization and possession of divine truth. When the action of the Holy Ghost has reached such a point that the teaching and learning Church agrees to accept in one definite and clear sense that which has been implicitly revealed, the Church (that is, the infallible teaching authority) can proclaim the definition of an article of faith.

In this manner the Holy Ghost makes it gradually clear that Mary's fullness of grace embraces also her Immaculate Conception. Suarez writes:

The truth about the Immaculate Conception is gradually received by the common accord of the Church with great benefit to souls, but not without the help of the Holy Ghost, who by degrees teaches the Church how to understand Mary's fullness of grace. This common accord of the Church can grow in such a manner that, finally, the Church can fully and simply define the matter.

V. THE REASONING of POPE BENEDICT XIV

In the eighteenth century, Cardinal Lambertini (Benedict XIV) investigated with unusual sagacity the question of Mary's assumption (77).

Is it definitely established that Mary died? Epiphanius of Salamis doubts that she did; and others simply deny it, giving the reason that the Blessed Virgin was preserved from original sin and that death is the punishment of this sin (78).

Cardinal Lambertini maintains that Mary's death may not be doubted. The law of death is universal, as it is evident from Psalm 88:49, "Who is the man that shall live, and not see death" and from the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:27, "... it is appointed unto men once to die ..." Christ who was without original sin, died; and, according to St. Augustine, if Christ had not died by the hands of the Jews, the Master would have died later, as it is the natural result of man's

existence. But, according to Cardinal Lambertini, death can be considered from a twofold aspect. He writes:

Death can be taken as the condition of a nature which because of its composition of opposing elements is bound to end in corruption some time; or death can be taken as the punishment of Adam's sin, by which we forfeited that special privilege of original justice, that is, we would not have needed to die. Therefore, although the Blessed Virgin Mary could not have died because of the latter reason, it is obvious that she was subject to death because of the former reason. And this is the common doctrine (79).

The true opinion is that the Blessed Virgin died, as it is also expressed by the liturgy of the Gregorian Sacramentary and by the modern Roman liturgy of the Assumption.

As theological reasons for Mary's assumption into heaven are given: her divine motherhood, her excellent virginity, her outstanding holiness, her close relation with her divine Son, and the great love of the Son for His Mother.

The more ancient Fathers of the Church are silent about Mary's bodily assumption, but the Doctors of the Middle Ages speak about this doctrine emphatically. On this point Cardinal Lambertini points to Cajetan, but also warns that the authorities of Athanasius, Jerome, and Augustine are not genuine.

The Church herself has accepted the opinion of Mary's assumption, as it is evident from the collect **Veneranda** of the Gregorian Sacramentary, from the Gothic Missal, and from the modern Roman liturgy.

Nevertheless, this doctrine is not an article of faith. Cardinal Lambertini writes:

"For, certain texts of the Sacred Scriptures that are usually advanced to establish this opinion, can be explained also in other ways; and there is no tradition of that sort strong enough to lead this opinion to the status of an article of faith."

As Suarez says, he who does not follow this view would be rash; to which Theophile Raynaud adds: "Such is the inclination of the Church toward this way of thinking that, in my estimation, a docile son of the Church can not speak differently."

Casaubon writes that the mind of the Church cannot be disapproved of, even when this mind is not explicit.

Pope Benedict XIV mentions Melchior Cano and St. Peter Canisius, and quotes the following remarkable text of Thomassinus:

We do not doubt but that the Virgin Mother of God dwells in heaven, body and soul, although our divine Faith does not explicitly teach us that fact. . . . But how many truths there are which, far from being defined, are supported by our divine Faith, and which are not open to question. If it were necessary to withhold assent whenever neither an evident reason nor an infallible authority were present, all communication among the human race would cease (80).

This outline gives ample evidence of the sources where the theologians from the seventh to the eighteenth century have found the main point of the doctrine of the assumption: namely, in the connection between Mary's corporal glorification and the dogma of her Motherhood; in the necessary connection of this special privilege with the traditional notion of Mary's worthiness and singular position in the economy of salvation.

Apart from these points appropriate reasons, *rationes congruentiae*, have been developed which, by themselves, do not prove the doctrine of the assumption, but show how beautifully this doctrine fits into the whole of revealed truths.

The authorities, *auctoritates*, are of different natures: there is first, and above all, the law of prayer, the *lex orandi*, in which the teaching Church expresses her mind; there is, secondly, the general mind of the faithful, the *sensus fidelium*; and there is, thirdly, the unanimity of the theologians, the *consensus theologorum*, the unanimous teaching of all, or of nearly all, theologians.

Some preachers and divines rely also on supposedly historical tradition that should have originated with the apostles.

In the following chapters we shall investigate these arguments in detail, and, to the best of our ability, develop them further (81).

CHAPTER 2

The Historical Point of View

With hesitation, and not without a certain distrust, the first theologians of the assumption appealed to Dionysius the Areopagite, a so-called eyewitness of Mary's assumption. But the works of Dionysius were first written about the year 500.

Are there no historically reliable witnesses concerning Mary's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven?

To the best of my knowledge, Mary's death is mentioned for the first time, by Origen, when he affirms that Mary had remained a virgin until her death. St. Epiphanius acknowledges that he does not know if the Blessed Virgin died and was buried. St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Paulinus, and St. Augustine speak casually about her death, but seem to know nothing about the circumstances surrounding her death. Once St. Augustine says explicitly: "Mary, daughter of Adam, died because of sin; Adam died because of sin; Christ died to wipe out sin" (1).

A certain Timothy, a priest from Jerusalem, either of the fifth or sixth century, seems to say that Mary was translated into heaven without dying.

Not one of these writers refers to a definitely established and historical testimony for the death of Mary or for her immortality. St. Augustine deduces her death from a dogmatic reflection; Timothy connects the immortality of the Virgin with her divine motherhood; Epiphanius tries to explain some obscure texts from the Sacred Scriptures; other writers presume that Mary died because death is the ordinary human lot and because no particular reason occurred to them to make an exception for Mary.

Although Epiphanius lived near Jerusalem for many years, he knows nothing of Mary's burial, and bears explicit testimony to his ignorance in this matter (2). Jugie concludes from this fact that, at the end of the fourth century, there was in Jerusalem as yet no mention of Mary's tomb in the valley of Gethsemane (3). And I do not know what

could be brought against this conclusion. It does not seem that St. Jerome, the great admirer of the Holy Places and one who traced indefatigably the graves of saints, had ever heard anything about a tomb of Mary in Jerusalem; he who made careful mention of the burial places of Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rachel, the twelve patriarchs, Josue, Eliseus, Abdias, Jonas, Micheas, John the Baptist, Lazarus, and James (the brother of our Lord).

In Pseudo-Dioscorus, who wrote between the years 451 and 500, we find mentioned the church of Mary in the valley of Josaphat (4). About the year 530 the same church is mentioned by the Archdeacon Theodosius who writes: "Here is the valley of Josaphat, here Judas betrayed our Lord. Here is the church of Mary the Mother of the Lord" (5).

Somewhat later, about the year 570, Pseudo-Antoninus of Piacenza wrote: "And in that valley of Gethseman is the basilica of the Blessed Mary, which it is said, had been her home and from which she had been bodily taken aloft." Or according to a second, and probably later, review of the same work: "And in that valley is the home of the Blessed Mary, from which, it is said, she had been taken into heaven" (6).

The texts known at present give the impression of a gradual development which we can visualize, perhaps as follows: In the course of the fifth century a church of Mary was built in Jerusalem, which afterward was associated with the house where Mary might have lived, and with her burial and assumption.

On the so-called tradition of Ephesus we do not wish to dwell longer than is necessary to make clear the complete absence of a genuine tradition.

For the burial of the Blessed Virgin at Ephesus, only one ancient text is quoted and this one is still explained incorrectly. The Council of Ephesus, in the year 431, wrote to the clergy and the people of Constantinople:

"When Nestorius, the renewer of godless heresy, had arrived in Ephesus where the theologian John (is) and the virginal Theotocos, the Blessed Mary, he separated himself from the assembly of the holy Fathers and bishops" (7).

The words: "the theologian John and the virginal Theotocos, the Blessed Mary" indicate the main church of Ephe-

sus, where the council was assembled, and which was named after its titleholders; as we also say in our language: I attend the Immaculate Conception, St. Patrick's, or the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral (8).

We possess the text of the genuine tradition of Ephesus, in a letter of Polycrates, the local bishop in the year 190. Polycrates wrote Pope Victor to demand of him for the Churches of Asia the right to celebrate Easter according to the tradition of that region. This letter of Polycrates reads in part:

For in Asia great persons have died who shall rise in the day of the coming of our Lord, when He shall descend from heaven in His full glory and shall make all saints rise: Philip, one of the twelve Apostles who died in Hierapolis, and two of his daughters who as virgins became very old, and another daughter who walked in the Holy Spirit and now rests in Ephesus; also John who lay on the bosom of our Lord, who was a priest and wore the petalon, who was a teacher and martyr; he too died in Ephesus. Again, also the martyr Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr of Eumeneas, who died in Smyrna. Why should it be further necessary to name Sagaris, bishop and martyr, who died in Laodicea, and the blessed Papyrius, and the eunuch Melito, who always walked in the Holy Spirit and who lies in Sardis (9).

Now suppose that the Blessed Virgin had died in Ephesus. Would Polycrates, who mentions even the daughters of Philip among the famous persons that had died and were buried in his region, not also have mentioned the Blessed Virgin if there had been a tomb of Mary in his city?

In favor of Ephesus, some authors have referred to the visions of St. Catharine of Emmerich. But it would be advisable, in every way, not to put the vexed question on this road, since there will be no way out of the difficulty. For, if we refer to this vision, anyone may, with equal right, point to the visions of St. Briget and of St. Mary of Agreda, who both narrate about the death and burial of the Blessed Virgin in Jerusalem. In other words, offering the visions of holy persons as an argument would be futile.

Thus there are no historical witnesses to be found for the end of Mary's life. Neither the Church of Jerusalem nor that of Ephesus knew in the fourth century, of a historical tradition concerning Mary's death and burial. Hence we

become reconciled to the definite pronouncement of St. Epiphanius that: "[at present, in the fourth century] no one knows of the end of Mary's life" (10).

At first it may seem strange that the Christians of Jerusalem in the fourth century did not possess a historical tradition about the end of the life of the Virgin Mother. But this can be explained very easily. At the first siege of Jerusalem, the Christians left the city and fled to Pella. Later some returned when Jerusalem rose again from its ruins. The Christian community disappeared entirely after the Roman war against Barkochba, in the year 135. Where formerly Jerusalem had been, the pagan city of Aelia Capitolina was built. One cannot wonder that many historical traditions were lost in Jerusalem during these terrible events.

The great teachers of the fourth century do not know of a historical tradition in connection with Mary's resurrection and assumption (11), no more than they know of her death and burial. The reputed historical data on which, later, the first theologians of the assumption based their theses, that is, the testimony of Dionysius the Areopagite and the empty tomb in Jerusalem, do not present a definite foundation. The account of Dionysius is without foundation, because it does not contain an assumption into heaven, and its significance is very doubtful, and it comes four hundred years too late. The theory of the tomb at Jerusalem is without foundation, since the tomb was discovered too late and was not known to the oldest witnesses.

On the other hand, there is nothing in the historical sources which could speak for the corruption of Mary's body; relics of her body were never mentioned; there existed nowhere a tradition about any sanctuary in which Mary's body was kept (12). Consequently, from the point of view of history, the dogmatic question remained as a whole. So far as we know the historical sources of the first four centuries, nothing can be advanced for the events, perceptible by themselves, of Mary's death, burial, resurrection, and assumption; nor can anything be advanced against these events.

Theology is called upon to solve this question with the aid of its own means and methods.

Livius is of the opinion that the historical tradition of the assumption should have continued to exist in the popular belief, as would be evident from the apocrypha (13). We can not agree with this opinion, since the apocrypha did not originate with the Catholic, that is, with the ecclesiastical, tradition and they cannot be regarded as historical documents. In the most ancient wording of these apocrypha, no mention is made of an assumption into heaven. It is also to be noted that a local tradition of a historical event from apostolic times, if such a tradition existed, could not suffice to prove that this event, as such, belongs to the apostolic treasury of faith (14).

CHAPTER 3

Mary's Assumption and the Sacred Scriptures

According to basic Catholic principles, Christ did not entrust the revelation of God to a book or a series of books, but to a living teaching authority. For that reason, the following argument does not hold: The belief is not to be found in the Sacred Scriptures and, therefore, it does not belong to the Christian revelation.

Because the Sacred Scriptures do not relate anything about Mary's death and burial, only the following points can be considered: (1) the prophecies and prototypes, (2) the universal pronouncements about the dignity of the Mother of the Redeemer, from which pronouncements her assumption is deduced as being a justified conclusion, or is demanded.

A clear prophecy, convincing by itself, is lacking. As to the prototypes, their existence can be accepted with certainty only when they are authenticated: (1) by an inspired author, or (2) by the unanimous declaration of the Fathers and Doctors, or (3) by an ultimate decree of the teaching authority of the Church.

The Sacred Scriptures do not give anywhere such a typologic figure as is placed beyond doubt by another Scriptural text. Our investigation must therefore direct itself to the prototypes of Mary's assumption, inasmuch as these prototypes are confirmed by dogmatic tradition or by the teaching authority of the Church.

In this connection, Paul Renaudin (1) defends the following thesis:

There remains then the experience, so we believe, that the corporal assumption of Mary was revealed by God under the veil of prototypes to which He had attached this prophetic significance. It is a second method of revelation, the first with regard to the epoch, through which God has made known the glorious assumption of Mary.

We shall briefly render the reasoning of this writer:

The Church recognizes Mary in the burning bush which Moses saw burning but not consumed. The liturgy reads: The bramble-bush which Moses saw and which was not consumed,

we identify as thy preserved and praiseworthy virginity, and so forth.

Many Fathers of the Church, among whom St. Proclus, St. Modestus, St. Andrew of Crete, and St. John Damascene, dwell on the connection which exists between the ark of the Covenant and the Virgin Mother. The Church invokes Mary as the Ark of the Covenant. Renaudin (2) writes:

In all truth, neither the tree of life, nor the burning bush, nor the Ark of Noe, nor the Ark of the Covenant could have been a prototype of Mary, if, as a victim of death, her body, consumed and disintegrated according to the lot of sinners, had become a prey to the corruption of the grave . . . as these types of themselves signify incorruptibility, integrity, immortality, or exemption from pain.

Several women of the Old Testament are prototypes of Mary. Thus the bride of the Canticle of Canticles. The liturgy of the Church seems to approve this interpretation, when on the day of Mary's assumption the Church sings: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising," and so forth (3). St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, and other writers explained other texts from the Canticle of Canticles with reference to Mary's resurrection and entrance into heaven. For instance: "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" "Arise, make haste, my love . . . and come" (4). Renaudin writes:

"As the first text, of which the Church shows us the prototypical meaning by the use She makes of it, these texts announce the resurrection of Mary and her entrance into heaven."

The Fathers of the Church rely particularly on the Sacred Scriptures to prove the reality of the assumption. Having quoted St. Modestus, St. Andrew of Crete, St. John Damascene, St. Peter Damian, and some others, Paul Renaudin concludes: "One must admit that according to all the rules of moral certitude, the question here is of interpretations which were authentically received in the Church."

Even the greatest Catholic theologians prove Mary's assumption from the Sacred Scriptures and agree in the meaning of the biblical prototypes. Thus did St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert the Great, St. Richard of St. Lawrence,

St. Thomas of Villanova, St. Francis of Sales, and Bellarmine. Renaudin writes:

"Thus the belief in the assumption is based on the word of God, who has revealed it formally, though implicitly, by means of several types in the epoch prior to the evangelical times."

The reasoning of Paul Renaudin is so weak that a detailed refutation may be called superfluous.

Renaudin supposes that the Fathers and the theologians looked for and found their main argument for Mary's assumption in the Sacred Scriptures. How can this hypothesis be held with respect to St. Epiphanius, who gives explicit assurance that the Sacred Scriptures do not mention anything about the end of Mary's life? Or with respect to St. Modestus, St. Andrew of Crete, St. John Damascene, who base the full weight of their reasoning on Mary's greatness and dignity, her divine motherhood and participation in the work of redemption? It is true that in their homilies the Byzantine Fathers, as later the doctors of the Middle Ages, quoted certain texts from the Sacred Scriptures, such as, those of the burning bush, the Ark of the Covenant, the ladder of Jacob, but if these Fathers and Doctors found in these texts a certain similarity to the Blessed Virgin, it was because they were already convinced of Mary's incorruption and assumption, for other reasons. When preachers reflect upon Mary's privileges, they naturally think of passages from the Sacred Scriptures. They find that, in one aspect or another, Mary's integrity can be elucidated through the narration of the burning bush, and these preachers connect Mary's maternal virginity with the Ark of the Covenant.

But that the bramble bush should be a prophetic indication of the assumption, what Father of the Church has ever said such a thing? And is the Ark of the Covenant perhaps translated into heaven (5)? The liturgical usage of this and of similar texts is very well justified, because the Church expresses her sentiments by means of the words and types which she finds in the Book of God. But from this usage no one has ever wished to conclude that the liturgical applications reveal to us the typical sense of the Sacred Scriptures.

Probably, in the Cantic of Canticles, one or more typical

meanings are to be accepted besides the literal sense, but apart from Renaudin, no one, so far as I know, has ever thought that this typical meaning should also include Mary's incorruption, resurrection, and assumption. In the Cantic of Canticles there is no question concerning these particular privileges.

How much truer and more profound is the clear expression of one of the most ancient and best theologians of Mary's assumption, Pseudo-Augustine, who writes:

There are matters which, although they are completely left out of the Sacred Scriptures, nevertheless are believed by right reason, because the very fittingness of the matter is accepted as an ancient master . . . consequently, what must be said of Mary's death, what of her assumption into heaven, of which the Sacred Scriptures do not say a word, unless the answer must be found in reason, which agrees with the truth? (6).

It should be noted that in theology the typical sense has no conclusive force unless its existence is first proven, either through other texts from the Sacred Scriptures, which is not the case for the assumption, or through a dogmatic tradition. In this supposition we do not have a solitary argument from the Scriptures.

Renaudin is likewise wrong when he asserts that the theologians want to prove Mary's assumption directly from the Sacred Scriptures. This may be evident from a brief search of the three greatest theologians whom he quotes in support of his contention, namely, St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Francis of Sales.

Although St. Albert the Great advances Psalm 131:8 and thinks that these words can be applied figuratively to the Blessed Virgin, whose body was the Ark of Christ's body, he also says that Mary rose from the dead incorrupt, because she was prefigured by the Ark of the Covenant. But he does not attach any importance to these arguments, since he omits them in his enumeration when he no longer invokes the Sacred Scriptures, but invokes St. Gregory, Dionysius, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and St. Peter and St. James, the two apostles who are quoted by Dionysius (7). An attentive reading of the *Mariale* should convince anyone that St. Albert the Great apparently does not aim at any proofs from the

numerous texts that he constantly quotes from the Sacred Scriptures.

St. Thomas asks himself if the Blessed Virgin were sanctified in the womb of her mother, because, he says, this is not mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. However, it can be proved by theological reasons, in the same manner that Augustine, that is, Pseudo-Augustine, proves Mary's bodily assumption, a fact which is not mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures either. St. Thomas writes:

I answer that nothing is handed down in the canonical Scriptures concerning the sanctification of the Blessed Mary as to her being sanctified in the womb; indeed, they do not even mention her birth. But as St. Augustine in his tractate on the assumption of the Virgin argues with reason, since her body was assumed into heaven, and yet Scripture does not relate this; so it may be reasonably argued that she was sanctified in her mother's womb (8).

A theological reason which St. Thomas gives for the assumption of Mary into heaven, is that she stands so close to the Head of the Christians. He writes:

"The resurrection of certain noble members from their being closely connected with the Head was not delayed till the end of the world, but followed immediately after Christ's resurrection, as is piously believed concerning the Blessed Virgin and John the Evangelist" (9).

In the **Expositio super salutatione angelica**, there is quoted only once a text from the Sacred Scriptures, whose genuineness is not established. This text is as follows:

Three curses are placed upon man because of sin. The first curse was placed upon the woman: that is, that she should conceive in corruption, that she should bear with difficulty, and bring forth in pain. But the Blessed Virgin was immune from this curse because she conceived without corruption, bore in comfort, and brought forth the Saviour in joy. The second curse was placed on the man, that is, that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Mary was free from this curse because, as the Apostle says, virgins were free from the cares of this world and their time was spent solely with God. The third curse was placed on both man and woman, that is, that they should return to dust; and from this curse Mary was immune as she was bodily assumed into heaven: for we believe that after death she was raised up and carried into heaven. Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place, thou and the ark, which thou has sanctified.'

The repeated "because" should make one think of an argumentation. Whoever this author may have been, he does not argue, but rather elucidates, the sense of the words of the angelic salutation. The reason why the Blessed Virgin brought forth without pain, is of course not that she brought forth in joy. Because virgins occupied themselves with God, yet it could happen that they ate their bread in the sweat of their brow. Thus the reasoning of Renaudin lapses when he says:

One could not pretend that in this case St. Thomas employs the Sacred Scriptures in an accommodated sense, as an accommodated sense has no demonstrative value in theology; unless one asserts that the Angelic Doctor talks in vain, one should admit that he recognized in this verse of Psalm 131 a proof of the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

This is a misinterpretation of the text, since the author of the **Expositio** did not intend to adduce arguments, but to give an explanation.

Still more unfortunate is Renaudin, when he refers to the words of St. Francis of Sales, who wrote:

It did not take the Blessed Virgin long to rise from the dead (at most it was three days); after her death her body was not subjected to decay, because it was never defiled during her holy life. Decay could not have had a hold on such integrity. Like the first ark, this ark too was made out of incorruptible wood from Sethim (10).

Perhaps Paul Renaudin believes that to be a reasoning which apparently is merely an exposition of a thesis that St. Francis of Sales proves in further detail. At first, St. Francis had spoken about Mary's death, and now he continues to prove that Mary is raised up and that her body was not subject to decay. In stating his thesis, St. Francis correctly compares the Blessed Virgin with the Ark of the Old Testament, an Ark which was made from incorruptible wood. His reasoning (11) follows.

1. "This is believed of the bodies of Elias and Henoch who, as it says in the Apocalypse, were dead for only three days and without decay. How much more of the Virgin, and so forth."

2. Like the second Adam, the second Eve did not share in the curse which was pronounced over our ancestors: "For dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19).

There is reason to exclude the Blessed Virgin from these universal laws. St. Francis writes:

"The honor which she had of carrying before the eternal Father, not the Ark of the Covenant, but His only-begotten Son, the Saviour, the Redeemer, renders her exempt from all these laws."

3. Many saints rose from the dead on the day of Christ's resurrection. St. Francis asks:

"And why not the Virgin? to whom, says the great St. Anselm, we should not refuse a single privilege or honour accorded to any ordinary human being."

4. What is most convincing for St. Francis of Sales, is the tradition and testimony of the teaching authority of the Church:

But finally, if one presses me to learn what certainty we have concerning the resurrection of the Virgin, I shall answer that we are as certain of it as of her death. The Sacred Scriptures which do not contradict the one truth or the other, do not explicitly establish either of them; but holy Tradition which informs us of how she died, teaches us with equal assurance that she rose from the dead; and should someone refuse to believe the tradition of her resurrection, he could not be convinced of that which appertains to her death and passing. But we who are Christians, believe, are certain of, and preach, that Mary died, and soon was raised up from the dead, because tradition renders it, and because the Church is witness to it: and should someone wish to deny it, we shall quote to him the words which the Apostle used in a similar case: Should someone appear to be contentious, neither we nor the Church of God shall be a companion to such a one.

Do the Sacred Scriptures contain universal pronouncements concerning the dignity of the Mother of the Redeemer, from which pronouncements her assumption is deduced as being a justified conclusion, or because of which pronouncements her assumption is demanded?

Usually the texts quoted are from Gen. 3:15 and Luke 1:28. On these texts the following reasoning is built (12):

Genesis 3:15 reads: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shall lie in wait for her heel."

Reference is made to the Redeemer and to His Mother who will obtain a complete victory over the devil, the enemy

of the human race. In what does this victory of Christ consist? St. John the Apostle writes: "For this purpose, the Son of God appeared that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:18). These works are first and foremost sin, and, secondly, the fruits of sin, concupiscence and death. All men are called to share in this triumph of the new Adam, but Mary is called in an entirely singular manner, as she is represented in the text of the Sacred Scriptures as the opponent of the devil and as the Mother of the Redeemer. Consequently neither sin, nor concupiscence, nor death shall have dominion over her. Our faith teaches us the same truth with regard to sin and concupiscence, as the Blessed Virgin was preserved from original sin and from all actual sins. For the very same reason, she is preserved from death, which she underwent in order to be in conformity with her Son, but not as a punishment for sin. As a punishment of sin, death is connected with the dissolution of the body and lasts till the general resurrection.

Luke 1:28 and 42: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women," and, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

Pope Pius IX gave us an authentic explanation of these words in his Apostolic Letter *Ineffabilis Deus*, when he wrote:

The very Fathers and writers of the Church reflected in heart and mind upon the fact that in the name and on command of God Himself the Angel Gabriel formally proclaimed the Blessed Virgin full of grace when he announced to her, her most sublime dignity as the Mother of God. They, consequently, taught that this singular and solemn salutation which was never heard at any other time, proved that as the Mother of God she was the seat of all divine graces, was adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, was even an almost infinite treasury of these gifts, an unexhaustible abyss, and all this to such a degree that she was never subject to any curse; and that as a sharer in God's perpetual blessing together with her divine Son she was worthy to hear the words from Elisabeth's lips, spoken under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost: Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb (13).

Mary's fullness of grace contains all privileges and gifts of grace which, according to right and reason, are befitting the Mother of God (14). Since Mary as the Blessed one, is

free from every curse, that curse also lapses for her which was pronounced over all human beings: "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19).

From a Catholic and theological point of view these arguments are unassailable. But the arguments should be presented as arguments based on the whole picture of Mary as the Mother of God and as the second Eve, as this picture flows from the sources of God's revelation, that is, from both the Sacred Scriptures and dogmatic tradition, and they should not be advanced as an argument which has grown out of the Sacred Scriptures alone.

For, according to the reasoning here presented, the texts of the Sacred Scriptures are explained in the light of reflection of the traditional doctrine and pronouncements of the teaching authority of the Church. Should the questions be asked: "Do the Sacred Scriptures say that Mary's victory over the devil must be universal and complete, and that this victory should take place before the second coming of Christ?" and, "Do the Sacred Scriptures teach that Mary's fullness of grace includes such privileges as also concern her body?" the answer would be and rightly so, that an appeal must be made to the teachings of the Fathers and the teaching authority of the Church.

Undoubtedly, the traditional idea of the most glorious and Blessed Mother is based, in a very considerable degree, on the data of the Sacred Scriptures. The Book of God states explicitly that Mary is the true Mother of God's Son, that she possesses that singular glory of a virginal motherhood, and that through her consent the Redeemer came into the world. In the light of these significant truths, such general pronouncements as "Blessed art thou," "full of grace," and "I will put enmities between thee and the woman," have become clearer, more concrete, and vastly more comprehensible.

But the most ancient Mariology, as we find this in St. Justin and St. Irenaeus (the unwritten tradition of the first Christian generations, originated from the teachings of the Apostles), not only clarifies the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, but also completes such teachings by the powerful parallel of Eve and Mary. This parallel indicates that,

according to God's plan of redemption, Christ and Mary are united into one principle of life, restoration and renewal. The figure indicates the inseparability of Christ and Mary in the redemption of mankind and in the victory over the seed of the serpent (15).

Keeping in mind this full and traditional idea of the Virgin Mother, the Fathers of the Church and the theologians have investigated, century after century, what definite privileges are contained in the general pronouncements of the Sacred Scriptures, or are demanded by Mary's singular dignity and her exceptional share in the redemption.

So, for instance, St. Thomas proves Mary's sanctification in her mother's womb. The Sacred Scriptures do not mention this sanctification, but St. Thomas writes:

It is reasonable to believe that she, who brought forth the Only-Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth, received greater privileges of grace than all others; hence we read (Luke 1:28) that the angel addressed her in the words: "Hail full of grace!" Moreover, it is to be observed that it was granted, by way of privilege, to others, to be sanctified in the womb . . . It is therefore with reason that we believe the Blessed Virgin to have been sanctified before her birth from the womb (16).

The main point of this reasoning is clearly the idea of the divine motherhood and what is connected with it. The text of the Sacred Scriptures is a sanctioning of the preceding dogmatic principle and is, in its turn, clarified: Mary is much more full of grace than all others.

Relying on another principle, but following the same method, Cardinal Newman proves the Immaculate Conception. He writes: "I have drawn the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, as an immediate inference, from the primitive doctrine that Mary is the second Eve" (17).

CHAPTER 4

Mary's Assumption and the Liturgy (1)

In the fourteenth century Nicephorus Callistus testified that about the year 600 the Emperor Mauritius ordered the feast of the assumption of the most Blessed Mother of God to be observed on the fifteenth day of August (2). His testimony is of somewhat late date but agrees with what, from the other side, we can learn from the Greek Fathers. No Greek homilies about Mary's assumption, written prior to the year 600, have been preserved, whereas after that date we find the feast mentioned in St. Modestus of Jerusalem, who died in the year 634, and in his contemporary, John of Thessalonica.

For this feast day a panegyric by St. Modestus has been preserved concerning Mary's glorious passing away, her burial in Gethsemane, her resurrection and bodily assumption into heaven. John of Thessalonica mentions that "nearly the whole world" observes the memory of Mary's passing, with the exception of a few places, among which is also Thessalonica (3).

About the middle of the seventh century the feast was introduced at Rome, and perhaps by the Greek Pope Theodore I (642-49). Pope Sergius I (687-701), who came from Antioch, added solemnity to the feast. He writes:

"It is decreed that on the days of the Annunciation, the **Dormitio** (falling asleep), and the Nativity of the Holy Mother of God and ever Blessed Virgin Mary . . . the **letania** (litany or procession) leaves from the church of St. Hadrian and the people meet at the church of St. Mary" (4).

In this text, the feast is called **dormitio** by way of exception, in agreement with the Greek word **koimesis**. In all the Roman texts of later date it is called the "assumption."

About the object of the feast there can be no doubt. The Byzantines, from whom the Roman Church took over the feast, glorified the glorious end of Mary's life and her bodily assumption into heaven. This fact is evident from the already mentioned homilies of Bishop Modestus of Jerusalem and of Bishop John of Thessalonica. From the seventh century

till the Great Schism, numerous homilies have been preserved in which, as with one voice, the glory of Mary's death and her glorification of body and soul are celebrated (5).

Rome accepted the feast as it existed with the Byzantines, not only as a remembrance of Mary's death but also as the feast of her assumption. With the same meaning, the feast of the assumption spread farther, in Carolingian times, to the Milanese, and into Spain. The prayer *Veneranda* from the Sacramentary of St. Gregory testifies clearly to the faith in the bodily glorification. The prayer reads: "It is befitting, o Lord, that we venerate the festivity of this day, on which the Holy Mother of God underwent temporal death but could not be restrained by the bonds of death since she had brought forth from herself Thine incarnate Son our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth with Thee," and so forth (6).

More ancient than the original Byzantine feast of the *Koimesis* is a feast of Holy Mary, a feast mentioned by St. Gregory of Tours about the year 590 (7). St. Gregory writes:

Mary, the glorious Mother of Christ, whom we believe to be a virgin before as well as after the birth of her divine Son, was translated into paradise amidst the singing choirs of angels and with the Lord leading the way. . . . The sacred festivity of this translation is celebrated about the middle of the eleventh month (8).

The object of the feast is not explicitly mentioned, but there is some reason for thinking that the feast was a remembrance of Mary's death, since, almost immediately before, mention is made of her translation. Complete certainty is given by a criticism of the Martyrology of St. Jerome, from the end of the sixth century, when January 18 is named as the day of the "deposition of the Blessed Mary" (9). The same feast was celebrated in Egypt, in the seventh century, on the twenty-first day of the month Tobi, which corresponds to January 18 (10).

From the end of the seventh century, the Deposition of the Blessed Mary of the Gallican liturgy changed gradually to the Assumption of the blessed Mary, but while retaining the date of January 18. This change can perhaps be ascribed to Roman influence.

The *Codex Epternacensis*, written about the years 702-6,

of the Martyrology of St. Jerome reads: "XV kl. feb. (that is, January 18) the Deposition of Holy Mary" (11).

The **Evangeliarium** of St. Denis of the seventh century (12), the **Gothic Missal** of the seventh century, and the **Missal of Bobbio** of the seventh century (?), call the feast the "Assumption of Holy Mary" (13).

Later, in the eighth century, the Gallican liturgy took over the Roman feast of the Assumption of the fifteenth of August, and gradually the more ancient feast of the Deposition of January 18 died out (14).

Some very noteworthy texts are known from this more ancient Gallican liturgy. The more important ones follow:

A **Lectionarium** of Luxeuil, seventh century, indicates the lessons which are to be read on the feast of January 18 (15):

"To be read on the feast of the Blessed Mary: The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians; 'Brethern, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord,' and so forth to 'And I think that I also have the spirit of God', (1 Cor. 7:25-40).

Lessons from the Holy Gospel of St. Luke; 'And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda', and so forth to 'She returned to her own house' (Luke 1:39-56)."

The Mass of the Gothic Missal (16) reads:

MISSA IN ADSUMPTIONE SANCTAE MARIAE MATRIS DOMINI NOSTRI.

Generosae diei dominicae Genitricis inexplicabile sacramentum, tanto magis praeconabile, quantum est inter homines assumptione virginis singulare: apud quem vitae integritas obtinuit filium, et mors non invenit par exemplum: nec minus ingerens stuporem de transitu, quam exultationem ferens unico beata de partu. Non solum mirabilis pignore, quod fide concepit; sed translatione praedicabilis, qua migravit. Speciali tripudio, affectu multimodo, fidei voto, fratres dilectissimi, corde deprece-mur attento, ut ejus adjuti muniamur suffragio, quae foecunda Virgo, beata de partu, clara de merito, felix praedicatur abscessu; obsecrantes misericordiam Redemptoris nostri, ut circumstantem plebem illuc dignetur introducere, quo beatam Matrem Mariam, famulantibus apostolis, trans-tulit ad honorem. Quod ipse praestare dignetur, qui . . . Collectio sequitur.

Deus, qui dum opus illud fabricae mundialis, quod sola imperii jussione creaveras, perire non pateris, domum tibi in alvum Virginis fabricasti, et

ne periret gens a te plasmata, revelasti saeculis inaudita mysteria, ut, quem caelorum excelsa non capiunt, parvus puellulae alvus includeret, precamur supplices, ut de quibus, et pro quibus suscepisti membra mortalia, intercedente beata Maria genitrice tua; capere facias, devicta saeculi ambitione, victoriam, Salvator mundi qui cum . . .

COLLECTIO POST NOMINA.

Habitatorem virginalis hospitii, Sponsum beati thalami, Dominum tabernaculi, regem templi, qui eam innocentiam contulit Genetrici, qua dignaretur incarnata deitas generari; quae nihil saeculi conscia, tantum precibus mens attenta, tenuit puritatem in moribus, quam perceperat angeli benedictione visceribus; nec per Assumptionem de morte sensit inluviem, quae vitae portavit auctorem; fratres carissimi, fuis precibus Dominum imploremus, ut ejus indulgentia illuc defuncti liberentur a tartaro, quo beatæ Virginis translatus corpus est de sepulcro. Quod ipse praestare dignetur qui. . .

COLLECTIO AD PACEM.

Deus universalis machinae propagator, qui in sanctis spiritaliter, in Matre vero virgine etiam corporaliter habitasti; quae ditata tuae plenitudinis ubertate, mansuetudine florens, caritate vicens, pace gaudens, pietate praecllens, ab angelo gratia plena, ab Elisabeth benedicta, a gentibus merito praedicatur beata; cujus nobis fides mysterium, partus gaudium, vita provectum, discessus attulit hoc festivum; precamur supplices, ut pacem, quae (quam) in adsumptione Matris tunc praebuisti discipulis, solemni nuper (solemniter) largiaris in cunctis, Salvator mundi, qui cum. . .

CONTESTATIO.

Dignum et justum est, omnipotens Deus, nos tibi magnas merito gratias agere, tempore celeberrimo, die prae ceteris honorando.

Quo fidelis Israel egressus est de Aegypto, quo virgo Dei genetrix de mundo migravit ad Christum; quae nec de corruptione suscepit contagium, nec resolutionem pertulit in sepulcro; pollutione libera, germine gloriosa, assumptione securo, paradisi dote praelata; nesciens damna de coitu, sumens vota de fructu; non subdita dolori per partum, non labori per transitum, nec vita voluntate, nec funus solvitur vi naturae. Speciosus thalamus, de quo dignus procedit Sponsus, lux gentium, spes fidelium, praedo daemonum, confusio judaeorum, vasculum vitae, tabernaculum gloriae, templum caeleste; cujus juvenulae melius praedicantur merita, cum veteris Evae conferuntur exempla. Siquidem ista mundo vitam protulit, illa legem mortis invexit; illa prevaricando nos perdidit, ista generando salvavit. Illa nos pomo arboris in ipsa radice percussit; ex hujus virga

flos exiit, qui nos odore reficeret, fruge curaret. Illa maledictionem in dolore generat, ista benedictionem in salute confirmat. Illius perfidia serpenti consensit, conjugem decepit, prolem damnavit; hujus obedientia patrem conciliavit, Filium meruit, posteritatem absolvit. Illa amaritudinem pomi succo propinat; ista perennem dulcedinem Nati fonte desudat. Illa acerbo gustu natorum dentes deterruit; haec suavissimi panis blandienti cibo formavit, cui nullus deperit, nisi qui de hoc pane saturari fauce fastidit. Sed jam veteres gemitus in gaudia nova vertamus. Ad te ergo revertimur, Virgo foeta, Mater intacta, nesciens virum puerpera, honorata per Filium, non polluta. Felix, per quam nobis insperata gaudia successerant. Cujus sicut gratulati sumus ortu, tripudiavimus partu, ita glorificamur in transitu. Parum fortasse fuerat, si te Christus solo sanctificasset introitu, nisi etiam talem Matrem adornasset egressu. Recte ab ipso suscepta es in Assumptione feliciter, quem pie suscepisti conceptura per fidem, ut quae terrae non eras conscia, non teneret rupis inclusa. Vere diversis infulis anima redempta, cui apostoli sacrum reddunt obsequium, angeli cantum, Christus amplexum, nubis vehiculum, assumptio paradisum, inter choros virginum gloria principatum, per Christum Dominum nostrum (7). . . .

COLLECTIO POST SANCTUS.

Vere sanctus, vere gloriosus Unigenitus tuus, Dominus noster Jesus Christus, qui cum de suo, Genitori esset aequalis, de nostro factus est minor ab angelis, et ex Patre habens immortalitatem, ex Matre quod moreretur adsumpsit, ut in se liberaret genus humanum de tartaro, dum ipsum mors non tenuit in sepulcro. Ipse enim pridie quam pateretur. . . .

POST MYSTERIUM.

Descendat, Domine, in his sacrificiis tuae benedictionis coaeternus et cooperator Paraclitus Spiritus, ut oblationem quam tibi de tua terra fructificante porregimus, caelesti permuneratione, te sanctificante, sumamus, ut translata fruge in corpore, calice in cruore, proficiat meritis, quod obtulimus pro delictis, Praesta omnipotens Deus, qui vivis. . . .

ANTE ORATIONEM DOMINICAM.

Exaudi, omnipotens aeternae Deus supplicem plebem tuam ob honorem Mariae beatissimae genetricis; et ita preces nostras benignus intende, ut cum fiducia dicere mereamur orationem, quam nos Dominus noster Jesus Christus Filius tuus orare sic docuit. . . .

POST ORATIONEM DOMINICAM.

Libera nos ab omni malo, ab omni delicto, auctor omnium bonorum et conditor, Deus; et intercedente beata Maria genetrice tua, contra

cotidiani hostis insidias cotidiana nos protectione defende, Salvator mundi, qui cum. . .

BENEDICTIO POPULI.

Deus, qui, cum te non capiunt coeli, dignatus es in templo uteri virginalis includi, Amen. Ut mater integra haberet fructum de spiritu, et incorruptionem de partu. Amen. Da plebi angelum custodem, qui Filium Mariae, fide concipiente, praedixit, Amen. Sanctificet gregem tuum illa benedictio, quae sine semine humano Redemptorem, Virginis firmavit in utero, Amen. Ut, te protegente, exultet Ecclesia de congregato populo, sicut Maria meruit gloriari de fructu, Amen. Quod ipse praestare digneris, qui cum. . .

POST EUCHARISTIAM.

Adesto, quaesumus, Domine fidelibus tuis, ut quae sumpsit fideliter, et mente sibi et corpore, beatæ Mariae intercessionem custodiat. Quod ipse praestare digneris, qui cum. . .

COLLECTIO SEQUITUR.

Quaesumus, Domine Deus Noster, ut, interveniente beata Maria, sacrosancta mysteria, quae sumpsimus, actu subsequamur et sensu, et ejus nobis indulta refectio vitam conferat sempiternam per eum qui tecum. . .

The English text follows :

MASS OF THE ASSUMPTION OF HOLY MARY THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD.

This inexplicable sacrament of the festive day of Our Lady the Mother of God should be proclaimed as much as it is unique among men because of the assumption of the Virgin: whose integrity of life obtained for her the Son, whose death is without a parallel: and her passing brought less insensibility to her than her blessed and singular birth carried her exultation. Not only is she wonderful because of her pledge which had its origin in her faith, but she is also praiseworthy in her translation, by which she departed. With a special religious service, with manifold affection, and with a pledge of fidelity, beloved brethren, let us pray with an attentive heart, that we may be aided and protected by the intercession of her who is proclaimed the fruitful Virgin, the blessed from birth, distinguished in merit, blessed in her departure; imploring the mercy of our Redeemer to deign to lead all those here present to that place to which He conveyed His holy Mother Mary into her glory, with the Apostles in attendance. Which He himself may deign to grant, Who livest and reignest, with God the Father in the union of the Holy Ghost, God world without end. The collect follows.

God Who since Thou didst not allow this work of earthly production

to perish, which Thou created by a mere act of Thy will, hast made Thee a dwelling in the womb of the Virgin, and Who in order that Thy people may not perish, hast revealed to the generations unheard-of mysteries, in that the small womb of a young maiden enclosed Him Whom the heights of heaven cannot hold, we humbly beseech Thee, that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Thy Mother, by overcoming worldly ambition, Thou bringest about the snatching of victory from whom and for whom Thou assumed mortal members, Redeemer of the world Who. . .

THE COLLECT AFTER THE NAMES.

Occupant of the virginal inn, Bridegroom of the blessed bridal-chamber, Lord of the Tabernacle, King of the temple, Who conferred that innocence upon Thy Mother from whom the incarnate God deigned to be born; who had nothing in common with the world, whose mind was engaged so much in prayer, who maintained the purity of morals, which she had received in her womb by the benediction of the Angel; and she who had carried the Author of life in her womb, did not experience the corruption of death through her assumption; most beloved brethern, let us beseech our Lord with copious prayers, that by His pardon the dead may be delivered from the infernal regions into the other world where the body of the Blessed Virgin was translated from the tomb. What He Himself may deign to grant Who. . .

COLLECT FOR PEACE.

O God, the creator of the universe, Who hast lived in the saints in a spiritual manner but in Thy Mother also in a bodily manner; she was enriched with the abundance of Thy fulness, flowering with clemency, blooming with charity, rejoicing in peace, eminent in piety, who was called full of grace by the Angel, blessed by Elisabeth, and deservedly blessed by all generations; whose faith is to us a mystery, her birth a joy, her life our guidance, and whose departure occasioned this feast; we humbly beseech Thee that Thou wilt bestow on all the peace which Thou hast rendered the disciples in the assumption of Thy Mother, O Saviour of the world Who with. . .

INVOCATION

It is meet and just, omnipotent God, that we give Thee duly thanks, at this most celebrated time, on the day to be honoured above all others.

In the same manner that faithful Israel moved from Egypt, so the virgin Mother of God departed from this world to Christ; she did not suffer any taint of corruption nor any decomposition in the tomb; she was free from all contamination, glorious in her offspring, secure in her assumption, preferred in the dowry of paradise; she did not experience the loss of in-

tegrity, but accepted the promises with regard to the offspring; she was not subjected to any pains of childbirth, nor to any anxiety in her passing away; her life was not ended because she willed it, and neither did her body disintegrate through the force of nature. She is the precious bridal-chamber from which proceeded the worthy Bridegroom, the light of the nations, the hope of the faithful, the terror of devils, the confusion of the Jews, the vessel of life, the tabernacle of glory, the heavenly temple; the merits of this young maiden are proclaimed better in contrast to the example of the old Eve. In as much as the former brought life into the world, the latter introduced the law of death; through praevarication the latter caused us to perish, through bearing the former save us. By the fruit of the tree the latter struck us in the very root; from the shoot of the former came a bloom which restored us by its vagrance, cured us by its fruit. The latter brought forth malediction in grief, the former confirmed benediction in salvation. The latter's perfidy consented to the serpent, deceived her husband, doomed her offspring; the former's obedience reconciled the Father, merited the Son, absolved posterity. The latter drank a toast of bitterness in the juice of the fruit; the former exudes perpetual sweetness from the fountain of her Son. The latter destroyed the teeth of her children by a bitter taste; the former fashioned them for the pleasing food of a very sweet bread, of which no one perishes except he who shrinks from being filled with this bread. But now we change old groans into new joys. To thee, therefore, we turn, fruitful Virgin, Mother undefiled, childbearer without the aid of a human father, honored through the Son, without a taint. Blessed, through whom we inherited unhopd for joys. As we rejoice in her origin, dance exultantly at her birth, so we glory in her departure. It would have been little had Christ sanctified thee only at thy birth and had not adorned such a Mother at her death. Rightly thou art happily received in thy assumption by Him Whom thou hadst piously received when thou wert willing to conceive Him by faith; so that thou who were not conscious of earth, were not held by a closed tomb. Truly, when her soul was freed from all earthly bonds, the Apostles paid her their last respects, the Angels sang, Christ embraced her, the clouds provided the means of conveyance, her assumption granted her paradise, her glory gave her the chief place among the choirs of virgins, through Christ our Lord . . . (17).

THE COLLECT AFTER THE SANCTUS.

Truly holy, truly glorious Thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who though He was equal to His Father, is made of us and less than the angels; and having immortality from the Father, took to Himself from His

Mother that which would die, in order that in Him the human race might be freed from the infernal regions, whilst death did not hold Him in the tomb. For, the day before He suffered, . . .

AFTER THE MYSTERY.

May, O Lord, the Holy Ghost, the co-eternal and cooperating Paraclete, descend upon these offerings of Thy benediction, in order that we may partake of the oblation which we offer Thee of Thy fruit-bearing earth after Thou hast Sanctified and fortified it from heaven, so that with the fruit changed into Thy body and the chalice into Thy blood, it may contribute to our merits as we offer it for our sins. Grant this almighty God Who liveth . . .

BEFORE THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Hear, almighty and eternal God, Thy beseeching people in honor of Mary Thy most blessed Mother; and do Thou, benignant, so direct our prayers, that with confidence we are worthy to say the prayer which Our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son has taught us to say . . .

AFTER THE LORD'S PRAYER.

God, deliver us from all evil, from all malice, Author and Framer of all good works, and through the intercession of blessed Mary Thy Mother, defend us by Thy daily protection against the snares of our daily enemy, Thou Saviour of the world Who with . . .

BLESSING OF THE PEOPLE.

God Who, whilst the heavens cannot hold Thee, hast deigned to be enclosed in the temple of the virginal womb, Amen. That Thy Mother undefiled should have the fruit of Thy Holy Ghost, and incorruption from birth, Amen. Give to Thy people the guardian Angel who announced to Mary Thy Son Whom she conceived in faith, Amen. May the same blessing which secured the Redeemer in the womb of the Virgin without human seed, sanctify Thy flock, Amen. That, under Thy protection, the Church may rejoice in the number of her children, as Mary deserved to rejoice in her fruit, Amen. What He may deign to grant who with . . .

AFTER COMMUNION.

Stand by Thy faithful, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that through the intercession of blessed Mary he may guard in his own body and mind that which he has devoutly received. What the selfsame may deign to grant Who with . . .

THE COLLECT FOLLOWS.

We beseech Thee, O Lord our God, that through the intervention of blessed Mary, we, in deed and in sentiment, may conform to the most

sacred mysteries which we have received, and that the refection granted us may bestow eternal life through Him Who with Thee, . . .

According to this Mass, the object of the feast is the assumption of Mary into heaven; the Blessed Virgin is taken up into glory. This assumption is remembered in its starting point: Mary's death; her departure occasioned this feast; but this assumption is remembered also in its terminus: Mary's victory over death: "for she who carried the Author of life, did not experience the corruption of death." Because she is the Mother of Life, of the Word incarnate, she is not subject to the dominion of death, although she underwent death (18). Mary was buried, but her body was translated from the tomb. Neither corruption nor decomposition could touch this body. Through a singular privilege, Mary escaped all the after effects of original sin: she brought forth without pain; she died without affliction. Christ, who in His birth safeguarded her virginity, who sanctified her in His conception, completed the homage to His Mother by her assumption into heaven. She is now safe in paradise, not in the earthly Eden, but in the glory of heaven: "Her assumption granted her paradise, her glory gave her the chief place among the choirs of virgins."

It is quite natural that the traditional comparison is drawn between Eve and Mary: Eve brought indirectly the law of death into the world, Mary brought forth Life; Eve struck us, Mary healed our wounds; Eve is subject to malediction, Mary is the blessed; Eve was rebellious, full of deceit, and dragged her posterity into damnation, Mary's obedience reconciled the Father, merited the Son, and liberated mankind from the bonds of original sin.

The theological meaning of this Mass cannot be relied on enough. Prior to Carolingian times, the Latin Church was as far as the Greek Church with regard to the doctrine of Mary's bodily glorification. No trace of any doubt concerning Mary's assumption can be discovered in the remarkable testimony of the Western liturgy. As in the Greek Fathers, the assumption is directly concluded from her divine motherhood and from her position as the new Eve in the plan of the redemption.

The influence of the apocryphal narratives about her

departure is slightly recognizable, as it is in the Greek Fathers of this period; but this influence is an outside one that concerns only the illustration of the doctrine, and not the doctrine itself: Mary is translated into glory, "with the Apostles in attendance" (19); at Mary's assumption, Christ accorded peace to His disciples (20). In the **Contestatio**, the Invocation, Israel's exit from Egypt is mentioned (21). The phrase, She did not suffer the stain of corruption, nor a decomposition in the tomb (22), recalls: "She did not experience corruption through contact with man, neither did she suffer the decomposition of her body in the tomb" (23). But, whereas in the apocryphal narrative the corruption is connected with contact with man, the Mass of the Gallican Missal silently corrects this wrong representation and emphasizes Mary's motherhood and participation in the redemption.

The Missal of Bobbio first gives a presumably older Mass for the solemnity of Holy Mary. But this Mass contains nothing indicating a connection with Mary's death and assumption. The Mass glorifies Mary as the Mother of God and sings the joys of her motherhood and the glory of her virginal bearing. What follows then is the probably more recent Mass for the Assumption of Holy Mary. This Mass communicates the **incipit Missae**, the Secrets and the **Contestatio**, as we already know them from the Gothic Missal, with unimportant changes.

The Epistle of this Mass is taken from the Apocalypse, 14:1-7; "And I beheld, and lo a lamb. . . . These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

The Gospel is taken from Luke 10:38-42: "Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain town. . . . Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Dom B. Capelle made a sagacious inquiry of how one has come to the two dates of January 18 and August 15. He presents the following solution: the Coptic apocrypha concerning Mary's departure should represent the oldest version. In them the date of Mary's death is set on the twentieth

or twenty-first day of the month Tobi, which is January 18. He writes:

But as to her assumption, whereas according to the most ancient version it took place the following day, the day of her funeral, three others report it on a much later date: the sixteenth of Mesore (Mesore being approximately our month of August). The more explicit one specifies further: "We returned, he said, to Jerusalem, and often visited the tomb. When 206 days had passed, on the evening of the fifteenth which is the morning of the sixteenth of Mesore, we returned to the tomb." The narrative of the assumption follows. But now, between the eighteenth of January and the fifteenth of August, there is exactly the 206 days of the Coptic narratives, if, as they, we count the months as having 30 days. The sixteenth of Mesore thus corresponds with the fifteenth of August, as the twenty-first of Tobi corresponds with the eighteenth of January; and we hold, if I am not mistaken, the key to the mystery. The eighteenth of January is the only primitive date, her death and assumption forming morally only one. Later, when the legend invented the 206 intercalary days, the Assumption, properly so called, was carried forward to the fifteenth of August. In the joyous and sudden uproar of the new feast, the recollection of the eighteenth of January was rapidly obliterated, so that, when ultimately the early version of an assumption closely following her death prevailed, the solemnity of the fifteenth of August survived alone, to gather and perpetuate the two remembrances.

Dom Capelle is of the opinion that the most ancient Coptic review, that of Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, places the assumption on the day following Mary's death. This is incorrect. As Pseudo-Bartholomew and Pseudo-John the theologian, Pseudo-Cyril does not speak of an assumption. Although Pseudo-Cyril strongly suggests that the body disappeared in an inexplicable manner, it is somewhere hidden in the earth, and no one shall find it till the day that Christ shall raise it in an incorruptible state.

Presumably only the feast of the twentieth or the twenty-first or Tobi existed first, the only one which is mentioned by Pseudo-Cyril, as a remembrance of Mary's passing away. The apocrypha of later date, for instance, those of Pseudo-Evodius and Pseudo-Theodosius, suppose the splitting of the feast in such a way that Mary's death is remembered on the twenty-first of Tobi, and her assumption on the sixteenth of Mesore. The question, if this splitting is to be

ascribed to a Monophysitical influence, as Jugie (24) tries to prove, still remains in suspense. Gradually, both Mary's death and her assumption were commemorated on both feast days: the feast of the eighteenth of January had already been accepted by the Western Church at the end of the sixth century, and shortly after, the Latin liturgy of this feast day proclaimed Mary's wonderful death, as well as her assumption. Likewise, the liturgical texts for the **Koimesis** and the Deposition, or Assumption of the fifteenth of August commemorated both Mary's death and her assumption.

For the very reason that after a time both feasts, although different in their origin and their historical foundation, seemed to celebrate the same object, the more ancient feast could be supplanted quite easily, particularly because of the authority of Rome and of Constantinople, which showed themselves more pleased with the feast of the fifteenth of August.

If the oldest apocryphal narratives are stripped of their pseudo-historical details, the two following ideas are found in them:

1. Mary's body is nowhere to be found on earth. It is a negative tradition which could have originated very easily in Jerusalem, and which corresponds with the equally negative testimony of St. Epiphanius.

2. But Mary's body has not become a prey to corruption. This conclusion is one which, in the apocryphal narratives, is based on reflections, but which, on the other hand, is rather deduced on dogmatic grounds by Catholic teachers.

What are the guiding motives in the liturgy of the Assumption? The answer to this question will be given by an examination of the liturgical texts. First, we shall consider the Gospel, the narrative of Martha and Mary, which in the Greek, Roman, and Gallican liturgy belongs to the feast.

In the Middle Ages the two sisters of Lazarus were regarded as the symbol of the active and of the contemplative life, and the Gospel was usually explained in this sense: that the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God was the most perfect model of both kinds of life. This is an allegorical explanation which is extant in Origen and was later accepted by St. Augustine and St. Gregory (25).

Nevertheless, this explanation does not seem to indicate the true reason for choice of this text on the feast of the Assumption. The liturgical usage rather pays homage to another meaning. As Dom Capelle has shown, the Gospel of Martha and Mary was read:

in Syria, in the twelfth century, for the Mass of Holy Women;

in Milan, in the tenth century, for the feast of St. Thecla, virgin;

in Naples, in the eighth century, for the feast of Holy Women, martyrs;

in Rome, in the seventh century, for the feast of St. Felicitas, a widow consecrated to God;

in Toledo, in the seventh century, for the feast of St. Eulelia, virgin, and for the common Mass of Virgins.

The choice of the text which is used for women consecrated to God, and more in particular for virgins, is based on the idea of a perfect consecration to God, especially by virginity. The "best part" is the renouncing of the world and worldly pleasures. In the liturgy of the Assumption, the emphasis is placed on Mary's perfect and glorious virginity and her voluntary consecration to the service of God.

After the Gospel, the Epistle as found in the **Lectionarium** of Luxeuil pleads for this conception. This Epistle is taken from the First Epistle to the Corinthians 7:25-40 and follows in part: "The unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit." Likewise, the Epistle in the Roman liturgy, according to Ecclesiasticus 24:11-20, reads: "I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord" (26).

Consequently, does a connection exist between Mary's assumption and her virginity, and is this connection expressed in the liturgical texts?

Dom Capelle has attempted to elucidate this point, and presents the following conclusion:

Since the second century, the conviction grew that St. John, by his virginity had merited a privileged death. The legend, in its oldest form, relates only his painless death. Soon after, other details were added: John lay still alive in his grave in Ephesus; or, his body had disappeared and was

taken up into heaven. For centuries the end of St. John was compared with that of Mary. Thus, for instance, there is found in the Mass of the Assumption in the Mozarabic Book:

“Concerning these things it is said that after a peaceful slumber, and also after the descent and destruction of the grave, Mary’s exit from it shall have to remain till the future coming as inexpressible and unintelligible as John’s entrance into heaven” (27).

In the Missal of Bobbio the Gallican Mass of the Assumption has for Epistle the text of the Apocalypse (16:1-7) about virgins, which text is found only one time, and that is in the Mass of St. John. The Martyrology of St. Jerome knows only two assumptions: that of St. John and that of Mary.

Dom Capelle concludes that on this point there existed a persistent tradition (28), the starting point of which is to be found in the apocryphal literature. Probably there was a narrative about Mary’s glorious death in the Acts of St. John. Of this narrative Pseudo-Melito should have given a purged recasting in the fifth century; but the monk Epiphanius, and especially Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, should have rendered the original narrative more faithfully. In these texts, only the disappearance of Mary’s body is mentioned. In the encraticist ideology, Mary owes this privilege to her virginity.

It is to say the least doubtful that the ancient Acts of St. John should have contained a narrative about the departure of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On the other hand, we should acknowledge, without hesitation, the relationship between the Acts of St. John and the narratives about the departure of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Furthermore, we may regard as certain the practice whereby, under the influence of the apocryphal narratives, many liturgical texts emphasized the connection between virginity and incorruptibility.

But, whereas the apocrypha rely exclusively on the corporal virginity, the liturgical texts pay homage to another, purer and more perfect, idea of virginity. In this case, virginity is the consecration, the total surrendering, in body and soul, to the service of God. In the liturgy, the incorrupti-

bility and the bodily glorification of Mary is primarily based on the divine motherhood and on Mary's share in the work of the redemption. This fact is evident from the collect **Veneranda**, in the Mass of the Gothic Missal, as much as from the Gregorian **Liber Responsalis** (29).

Thus, in establishing the dogmatic contents of the **lex orandi**, one is justified in omitting these infiltrations of the apocrypha, no matter how important such infiltrations may be for the history of the liturgy.

The very apparent connection between the apocrypha and the liturgy of the assumption caused a forceful reaction that was started by St. Bede (30) and Ambrosius Autpertus (31) and that, for a moment, endangered the very existence of the feast (32). A synod of Mainz, in the year 813, ordered the feast to be celebrated in the whole of Franconia, but in the course of the same century attempts were made, from various sides, to have the liturgical celebration pass as a remembrance of Mary's death and her glory in heaven, with the exclusion of her resurrection and bodily assumption.

It is thus found in Paschasius Radbertus, in his famous letter which he sent into the world under the name of Pseudo-Jerome (33), and again, in the Martyrology of Ado and in that of Usuardus. This letter of Pseudo-Jerome was partly accepted in various breviaries and, from the thirteenth century on, in the Roman Breviary as well. Hence, for centuries, in the breviary lessons of the second nocturn, a doubt was expressed about Mary's anticipated resurrection and bodily assumption. The letter reads: "Many of us doubt, whether Mary was assumed into heaven, body and soul, or departed leaving her body behind. However, it is not known how or when, or by whom her holy body was taken from the tomb, or where it was transferred, and whether it had risen" (34).

Since Pope Pius V, these lessons were taken out of the Roman breviary and replaced by others that will be discussed later.

Once more, in Rome itself, the question was brought up. In the year 1741, a commission appointed by Pope Benedict XIV put the question whether the name of the feast, the assumption, should not be changed to that of pausation, dormition, or departure. The commission wrote: "Lest per-

haps by the retaining of the name Assumption the going into heaven of the Blessed Virgin Mary not only in soul but also in body, as is piously believed, might mean, or might be thought to mean, that it is a question of faith" (35).

It was proposed at the same time to take the narrative of the **Historia Euthymiaca** out of the Breviary:

For the second nocturn the lessons are chosen from St. Bernard; it seems more satisfactory to change to them from those which previously were read from St. John Damascene. For it is known to every one how little critics approve of that part of his history which was unknown to other ancient writers and which St. John Damascene describes in the prescribed lessons (36).

The proposals of the commission were not agreed to, and Pope Benedict XIV, who himself had set to work on a reform of the breviary, died before he could work out his plan.

It is worth mentioning that for a long time in the Cathedral of Paris an extract from Usuardus was read in which the bodily assumption was doubted. About the year 1540, the text from Usuardus was replaced by a sermon that very definitely shelved the authority of Pseudo-Jerome and which, with an appeal to the authority of the Church, held that Mary had risen and was assumed into heaven, body and soul (37). In the year 1688, the text from Usuardus was brought back into use (38).

Now, in the matter of the assumption, what is the dogmatic significance of the **lex orandi**?

In order to answer this question, the liturgy of the assumption should be divided according to a twofold point of view:

1. as a voice of the sentiments of the teaching Church here and now;

2. as a means of distinguishing the traditional opinions of the teaching authority of the Church in past ages.

It is necessary to keep separate these two points of view, not because the teaching authority of the Church is in the twentieth century greater than it was in the fourteenth, but because the **sentire cum Ecclesia**, to think as the Church does, demands of every theologian, as of every Catholic, that, with regard to all things concerning dogma, he shall direct his mind to the universal judgment of the living Church, be

that judgment neither explicit nor ultimately definite. In the manner of supposition, we may say that, if it were true that the liturgy of the fourteenth century understood Mary's assumption to be a glorification of her soul alone, this cannot be taken as a cause for disagreement with the *lex orandi* of the twentieth century if now it accepts the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven. The reason for this statement can easily be found: doubts and uncertainties of former centuries can, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, give place to later certainty.

To be complete, we should analyze all Catholic liturgies concerning the feast of the assumption. But such a study would lead us too far; and for that reason we limit ourselves to an examination of the dogmatic contents of the Roman liturgy regarding the assumption as it is used today by almost the entire Church.

Thus our first question is: What does the Roman liturgy of today teach us, as an expression of the sentiment of the teaching Church here and now, with regard to the assumption of Mary into heaven?

In the Mass of the Assumption, Mary's death is mentioned, and the reason for this death. It reads: "we realize that she has passed from us because of the condition of her flesh" [Secret], that is, according to the fate of all human flesh. But it does not say explicitly whether or not the assumption is a bodily one. There is only talk of assumption (39), so that, in this case, we cannot give a definite answer, unless the word "assumption" in itself should have the meaning of a bodily assumption. We shall deal with this question in greater detail.

In its antiphones and responses, the Office of the feast repeats that Mary is assumed into heaven, or ascended; that she is glorified above the choirs of angels, that she reigns with Christ forever. But is she also bodily risen and glorified?

The lessons of the second nocturn, on the day of the feast, are taken from St. John Damascene (40) and give the theological reasons for Mary's Corporal glorification.

Mary died: "She yielded to the law given by Him whom she had brought forth;" as Mother of the living God, as the

mother who had conceived the Son of God in a virginal manner and without sorrow, and who had consecrated herself entirely to God, she remained free from the consequences of death, and she, the ark of the living God and the paradise in which our redemption occurred, was assumed, body and soul, into heaven by her Son. Mary's anticipated resurrection is not explicitly mentioned, but is presupposed by the entire reasoning (41).

On the fourth day of the Octave we have the lessons from the **Historia Euthymiaca** (here given as: "from the sermon of St. John Damascene"), a legend of later date, based on the apocryphal booklets **de transitu**. According to an ancient tradition, the apostles came flying through the air to Jerusalem, to the deathbed of the Blessed Virgin. Hymns sung by angels were heard; the apostles buried Mary's body in Gethsemane. For three days the apostles heard heavenly music. Then, St. Thomas arrived, and desired to see the sacred body for a last time. The casket is opened, but the body is not to be found. One finds only the shrouds pervaded with a sweet odor. The apostles can only think that it also has pleased Christ, who had immaculately preserved her virginity, to honor her immaculate body with incorruptibility and with translation before the general resurrection.

At present we do not need to speak about the historical unreliability of the **Historia Euthymiaca** (42). Furthermore, when the text reads: "we have learned from an ancient and very true tradition" (43), the breviary corrects it by saying: "we have learned from an ancient tradition." It could not be indicated more clearly that the Roman Church does not guarantee the veracity of this tradition.

The point at issue is this: Has the Roman liturgy of today taken a stand in a debate about a question on which various opinions have been given formerly?

On a superficial view, the **Historia Euthymiaca** seems to deduce Mary's resurrection and bodily glorification from the empty grave. And, because the narrative was understood in this sense, and due to the reputed authority of Damascene, the legendary narrative was inserted in the breviary.

In reality, in the **Historia Euthymiaca** there is no mention of a resurrection or of a translation into heaven, but

only of an incorruptibility and of a translation into an unknown place (as in Pseudo-Bartholomew, Pseudo-Cyril, Pseudo-John the theologian) (44).

On the fifth day within the octave a sermon of St. Bernard is read, of which the words, taken in their full meaning, suppose the bodily assumption into heaven. Beyond words is the joy of the citizens of heaven who hear her voice, see her face, and enjoy her presence (45).

As to the name of the feast, if the word "assumption" is analyzed only in an etymological manner, the idea of a bodily assumption into heaven is not expressed, no more than by the word "ascension" which is said of the bodily ascension of Christ into heaven, and neither by the word "descensio," which refers to the descent of Christ's soul into hell. In this case the usual sense is the rule. Well then, the present-day liturgy knows only one assumption, that of Mary. Why should the Roman Church have preferred this name for Mary's feast, if, as is the case with other saints, it does not signify more than that Mary is assumed into heaven with only her soul?

Although it is true that in former times the assumption of St. John also was celebrated, the reason for this celebration is to be found in the opinion which was widely spread at that time, that John the Evangelist was bodily translated (46) or that, in any case, the fate of his body was exceptional (47).

The liturgical use is mainly dependent on the Latin translation of the Sacred Scriptures, in which **assumere** (to take up) and **assumptio** are said of a bodily assumption; for instance:

Matthew 4:5 reads: "Then the devil took him up into the holy city."

Mark 16:19 reads: "And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God."

The Acts of the Apostles 1:11 reads: "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven."

The Acts of the Apostles 1:22 reads: "Until the day wherein he was taken up."

In languages other than English, such as Dutch and German, the people use the same word for the ascension of

Christ and the assumption of Mary. This parallelism is confirmed by the Roman liturgy itself, when it sings: "This day the Virgin Mary went up into heaven: rejoice that she reigneth forever with Christ" (48).

Summing up, we may conclude that the Roman Church in her liturgy, expresses very distinctly her preference for the pious opinion of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven, as she also adheres to the opinion that Mary underwent death. As the Latin theologians of ancient times invoked the authority of the prayer **Veneranda**, so we have at present the right and obligation to assert the present-day Roman liturgy as an important authority, which, it is true, does not decisively solve the question, but aids in surmising the ultimate solution and which has already brought that conclusion much closer.

But should we not be allowed to go a step further and to say, on the strength of the axiom **lex orandi lex credendi**, that the Church celebrates Mary's bodily assumption into heaven? In consequence, should this be believed as of divine faith?

In this manner, for instance, Wiederkehr reasons when he writes:

For centuries the corporal assumption has been the object of one of the most festive and general Feasts of Obligation of the Church, an object of worship and at the same time an object of faith. Thereby, according to the axiom of lex orandi, lex credendi, the Church has signified, in a most clear manner, the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary as an article of faith and has desired also the belief in this doctrine; for, the worship forms a law, an obligation to believe; for the simple reason that it is the means of expressing the magisterium ordinarium of the Church (49).

No, this reasoning is incorrect. Without a doubt the Church can exercise her infallible teaching authority by liturgical ordinances and celebrations. But can we with certainty conclude from the present-day contents of the liturgy of the assumption and from the allied decrees of the Roman Church, that she has so exercised this authority (50)?

Without prejudice to the better judgment of others, we do not think that the Church has so exercised her teaching authority, for the following reasons:

1. If the Roman liturgy of the present day is compared

with the liturgical texts of the eighteenth century, we can see immediately that the ancient Roman and Gallican liturgies held the bodily assumption in a more decisive manner than we do today. Nevertheless, thereby was not meant an exercise of the infallible teaching authority with regard to the bodily assumption (and the resurrection), since in later centuries both the Roman and the Gallican liturgy express a hesitation with respect to the resurrection and the bodily assumption. The historical development of the liturgy compels us, therefore, to distinguish between that which always and everywhere was considered an established object of the feast, namely, Mary's death and glorification above all saints in heaven, and that which was the object of a pious opinion, namely, Mary's anticipated resurrection and bodily glorification.

2. A few years after the reform of the breviary by Pope Pius V in 1568, the Martyrology appeared, compiled by Baronius: *Martyrium Romanum restitutum, Gregorii XIII P. jussu editum, cum notis Caes. Baronii*. For the feast of the fifteenth of August, Baronius calls to mind the doubts formerly expressed by Usuardus in his Martyrology, and remarks: "The Church of God seems to be more inclined towards that side, that together with her flesh (Mary) is assumed into heaven; for, in the celebration of this day she consigns those homilies of the Sacred Fathers to be read which strengthen the things concerning her assumption."

This note means that, in an official edition of the Martyrology, the Roman Church permits notes to appear of Baronius; and this pious and learned man gives his opinion on the dogmatic meaning of the changes introduced since Pope Pius V. "The Church of God seems to be more inclined" to accept the bodily assumption of Mary.

According to the opinion of this authoritative witness, we are still far from observing an exercise of the infallible teaching authority. The word "seems" expresses the uncertainty of Baronius for his own contention, and the words "more inclined" express nothing more than a preference. Thus the Church seems to give her preference to the opinion of St. John Damascene over those of Pseudo-Jerome and Usuardus (whose opinions the Church had formerly taken up in her

liturgical books); but the Church does not intervene decisively to close the debate.

3. If the Roman Church, by her very liturgical texts and decrees, had merely meant to exercise her teaching authority regarding Mary's resurrection and bodily assumption, how is it that the greatest theologians of modern times, Canisius, Suarez, Lugo, Cardinal Lambertini, declare with so much emphasis that, although the bodily assumption is a pious opinion to which everyone should adhere, it is not of faith, since there is not enough tradition to form faith (Suarez), nor is the tradition such that it is strong enough to raise this opinion to the position of the articles of faith (Cardinal Lambertini)? He who has followed the reasoning of these experts, cannot but be convinced that these experts did not consider the liturgy of the assumption a virtual law of faith with regard to Mary's resurrection and corporal assumption.

On the other hand, since the time of Pope Pius V the liturgy of the assumption has remained unchanged, so that we, theologians of the twentieth century, should not find in it more than our predecessors did.

For that reason we fully assent to the pronouncement of St. Peter Canisius, when he says:

Again, the things which the Church celebrates by her rite and public veneration, are, as one might say, of such a kind that they can be believed the more as being pious and probable matters, the more eagerly they are approved by the Doctors, and the greater consent they receive from the faithful. To this class belongs what we profess concerning the Mother of God, namely, that she was assumed into heaven not only with her soul but also with her body, and that she is blessed completely (51).

We are of the opinion that what Suarez wrote in his time, about the feast of the Immaculate Conception, should be applied to the feast of the assumption. He wrote: "This feast can be celebrated piously and without any danger, because primarily it is founded on [the death and glorification] of the Virgin; consequently, it truly regards the circumstances [of the anticipated resurrection and bodily glorification] as being piously believed."

Again, if we regard the liturgy of the assumption as a means of knowing the traditional sentiments of the teaching authority of the Church throughout the centuries, we at

once become aware of the fact that the doctrine of the resurrection and bodily assumption of Mary passed through three periods. The most ancient liturgical documents celebrate, without a trace of hesitation, Mary's victory over death and her bodily assumption into heaven; thereafter follows a period of reaction, at least in some Churches; but in more recent centuries this reaction died out, so that at present Mary's bodily glorification is expressed in the liturgy everywhere.

What value should be given to this reaction? First of all, the importance of this reaction should not be overestimated, since it was only local, never general, and did not continue. Secondly, we should note that those who reacted took no particular stand on this question. According to Ado and Usuardus, the Church did not know whether Mary was glorified with or without her body. Usuardus said:

"Because that venerable temple of the Holy Ghost has been concealed by divine will and design, the moderation of the Church selected with piety not to know, rather than to teach that something frivolous and apocryphal should be held about this matter" (52).

Likewise the famous Pseudo-Jerome, Paschasius Radbertus, writes:

"This [Mary's resurrection and bodily assumption], because nothing is impossible with God, is not denied by us as a fact concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary, although out of prudence and without violation of the faith, it is proper to believe with a pious desire rather than to define unadvisedly that which is not acknowledged without danger" (53). Actually we have here a very simple case. Pious and learned men who know nothing about the teaching of their Greek contemporaries, let themselves be hypnotised by the apparent connection between the opinion concerning Mary's assumption, as it was commonly held in their time, and the historically valueless apocrypha. These men, without taking into account their own Gallican or Roman liturgies and without looking into the genuine grounds of the doctrine, considered it a very doubtful matter that Mary was raised up and assumed into heaven. Without sound reasons, such men reacted against the pious belief of the Church, a belief

which had gained so much ground by that time that a mere negation was impossible.

How is it, one may ask, that this doubt made itself felt centuries later and influenced the liturgy to such a large extent?

It is one of those astonishing examples of the apparent victory of the pseudoepigrapy. For, one was of the opinion that this doubt could be read in the two greatest Fathers of the Church of antiquity, namely, Augustine and Jerome, the teachers pre-eminently of the Middle Ages. From this opinion there arose a hopeless confusion which was cleared up completely only when all the facts of the case became known. In the thirteenth century, St Albert the Great struggled deftly enough in trying to explain the text of "Jerome," without suspecting that the letter to Paula and Eustochium was originated in the ninth century. In the fourteenth century a certain master of theology said that the letter of "Jerome" should have been placed on the list of forbidden books, and no less a person than St. Briget entered the lists to defend the bodily assumption of Mary as well as the orthodoxy of St. Jerome. St. Bridget wrote:

[The Mother of God said to her spouse]: Why did that teacher who tosses words in the air, say to thee, that the letter of my Jerome in which he speaks of my assumption, should not be read in the Church of God, because it seems to him that there should be read in it that Jerome doubted about my assumption, because he said that he did not know whether I was assumed bodily into heaven or not, or was taken away by certain people? Therefore, I, the Mother of God, answer that Jerome did not doubt about my assumption, but because God had not clearly revealed the truth of this sort, consequently Jerome preferred to doubt piously rather than to define something which was not revealed by God (54).

Nothing speaks so strongly for the indestructible vital strength of the pious opinion concerning Mary's bodily assumption into heaven, than the fact that even a doubt, though expressed in the liturgy, has not restrained the theologians of the Middle Ages or the pious faithful from expressing, with ever-growing emphasis, their conviction that Mary was glorified in heaven, body and soul. As a result, we must acknowledge in this liturgical reaction a case, by no means isolated (55), of a pseudo-learned theology that

gradually thrust its prejudices upon some liturgical formulas, in that manner causing a confusion which the religious sense of the ordinary Christians could not resolve.

Thus, the reaffirmation of the bodily resurrection and assumption in the present day liturgy is a conscious confirmation of the ancient liturgical tradition and a return to that tradition. This re-affirmation represents, as it were, a judgment in second instance.

In consequence, Mary's resurrection and bodily assumption into heaven is not a merely pious opinion of St. John Damascene, of St. Andrew of Crete, and of other individual Fathers of the Church or of theologians. The Church herself has assumed this pious opinion and made it her own.

As Cardinal Lambertini said: "On the feast of the Assumption, the Church reads those homilies of St. John Damascene and of St. Bernard, in which it is very clearly said that the Blessed Virgin was assumed into heaven, body and soul, what indeed serves as proof and argument that the Church has embraced this opinion" (56).

CHAPTER 5

Teachings of the Church Fathers and of the Theologians in Agreement

We reviewed the teachings of the Fathers and of the theologians concerning Mary's assumption into heaven, so far as these teachings could be found in the texts from the fourth to the twelfth century (1). From the seventh century onward, the Greek Fathers considered Mary's death a mystery of glory, a victory over death, a crowning of her divine motherhood, of her exceptional holiness, and of her share in the work of redemption. The tone of these Fathers is generally firm and self-assured, as of men who know what they say and who do not have to struggle against a single doubt. Yet, it is difficult to decide if they actually proclaimed Mary's resurrection and bodily assumption as a truth that already belonged to the treasury of faith, since their method of reasoning and their accumulation of reasons, which should serve to communicate their own conviction to their readers and listeners, seemed to militate against this possibility. At times one even gets the impression of a slight hesitation, as, for instance, in St. Modestus of Jerusalem (2) and in St. Andrew of Crete (3). Sometimes, from the manner of speech of the orators, we might conclude that their listeners did not consider the bodily assumption of Mary an article of faith. St. Andrew of Crete asked: "Do you wish me to give a proof?" and answered his own question by saying that "no one should make merry over the question of how empty the tomb is (4)." Again he wrote: "He who does not believe, let him go (to Jerusalem), and convince himself of the truth of this doctrine with his own eyes (5)." Ordinarily such a tone is not used in speaking of an article of faith. The very nature of the texts should be taken into account: they are songs of praise concerning Mary's end of life and poems about her glory in heaven. In such writings, we should not expect a finely weighed formulation of the certitude with which a doctrine is accepted.

Nevertheless, there are certain texts from which it is evi-

dent that Mary's bodily assumption was not preached or held as an article of faith, but rather as a pious opinion. St. Andrew of Crete exclaimed: "Today she who brought forth life enters into the place of immortal life," and continued: "if I do not venture too far and speak about things which may not be touched (6)." Equally significant is the prudent tone of the **Menologium Basilianum** which states: "God has translated [Mary's body] to a place which is known to Him (7)." Where is this place? St. Andrew of Crete asked himself this question and left two possibilities open: (1) Mary is glorified in heaven, body and soul; (2) Her body is assumed into paradise, her soul is in the highest heaven (8).

The general line of development of the pious opinion concerning Mary's assumption is clearly marked. When for the first time an Eastern bishop spoke on the question of Mary's end, that is, in so far as our documents go, to St. Epiphanius of Salamis in the Fourth century, the answer was: "I do not know what to say. Perhaps the Blessed Virgin remained immortal; perhaps she died; perhaps like Elias she was assumed into heaven; perhaps the end of her life was glorious as that of St. John." The Father of the Church who first spoke explicitly about Mary's end of life, was inclined to accept for the Mother of God a bodily assumption, or, in any case, an exceptional phenomenon. But he could come no farther than to a doubtful pronouncement, "a suspension of judgment with some inclination to one side." Three hundred years later hardly an echo of this is heard, and the pious opinion had become a doctrine almost universally accepted.

In the Latin Church of the sixth century, St. Gregory of Tours expressed himself decisively in favor of Mary's resurrection and bodily assumption. But also in the sixth century the Gelasianum, soon followed by St. Bede, condemned the booklet **de transitu**. This condemnation set off a reaction, forcefully carried through, against the doctrine of Mary's bodily glorification. Following the example of Pseudo-Augustine and Pseudo-Jerome, some writers continued to express their doubt: Pseudo-Alcuin, Ado, Usuardus, Notker, Olilo of Cluny, Aelred of Rievalis, and Ernald of Bonevalle.

In the same period, the bodily assumption was defended as a very probable, and by some even as an established truth

for example, Hincmar of Reims, Flodoardus, Atto of Verceil, Fulbertus of Chartres, Guibertus of Nogent, Hugo and Richard of St. Victor, St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, Amedeus of Lausanne, Abelard, Alamus of Ryssel, St. Peter Celle, Philip de Harveng, Absalon of Springkirchbach, Peter of Poitiers, Peter of Blois, Hildebert Cenomanensis.

In short, from the eighth through the twelfth century, the theologians of Western Christendom are ranged in two camps. Nobody denies Mary's resurrection and bodily assumption; but some clearly rely on the doubtful element of these privileges, whereas others agree with the authority of the liturgy usually invoked by them, and with the authority of Pseudo-Augustine.

We should not forget that the reasons advanced by these doubters did not hold, whereas the authority of the liturgies of the day supplied a genuine argument. Consequently, when Pseudo-Augustine transferred the question to the domain of theology, many of the best theologians hesitated no longer to defend, with forceful arguments, the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century, Engelbert of Admont, who died in the year 1331, was equally as far as Pseudo-Jerome whom he copied with predilection. According to Engelbert the pious faith is a pious doubt. He writes: "With regard to the piety of faith by means of which one should feel about those matters concerning God and divine things which are doubtful and hidden, it must be noted that, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews 11:1, "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not."

No wonder that such a half-grown theologian drew the conclusion:

"We do not deny that the Blessed Virgin rose, although without prejudice to the faith this should be considered a pious desire rather than an unadvised definition of which one is ignorant without peril (9)."

It is quite understandable that many writers of small stature lost their head completely because of these conflicting authorities. Engelbert for instance quotes St. Augus-

tine and St. Bernard as defenders of the bodily assumption; but St. Jerome says that we know nothing about it, and equally strong is the doubt of St. Anselm.

What makes the situation still more confused is the fact that most of the texts quoted in the debate are not genuine. Thus, only one genuine text can be found among the material gathered by Engelbert (10).

Since the time of St. Albert the Great and the great masters of Scholasticism, the scales began to turn permanently. Mary's death, resurrection, and assumption were more and more accepted by the best theologians. From century to century, the pious faith gained evident ground, so that since the Council of Trent hardly a discordant note can be heard.

A few examples may suffice:

St. Bonaventure wrote:

Divine justice demands that all rise together in accordance with a universal law. But what I have said of Christ, I say also of His most Blessed Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary (11).

Gerson said:

There was a time when it was not generally held that the Virgin Mary was in Paradise, body and soul, as it is now held . . ." "To the right hand of her Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mother was raised above all choirs of angels, as is believed by our holy Mother the Church from whose authority one should not derogate (12).

St. Antoninus wrote:

The whole Church and the doctors piously believed that the glorious Virgin is glorified in heaven, body and soul (13).

Dominicus Soto claimed:

There is no doubt but that the most holy Virgin is raised up to eternal life which she enjoys with her Son in heaven (14).

Melchior Cano argued:

It would be wanton temerity for one to say that the Blessed Virgin is not bodily assumed into heaven, because such a one would go contrary to the common mind of the Church (15).

Estius asserted:

There are many who piously believe that although there is no doubt but that the Blessed Mother of God died, she was assumed into heaven after having bodily risen to eternal life (16).

De Lugo wrote

Such a proposition would be wanton if some one should say . . . that

the Blessed Virgin was not assumed into heaven, body and soul (17).

Billuart said:

It would be rash to say that the Blessed Virgin was not assumed into heaven, body and soul (18).

Here and there a false note was heard, as, for instance, from a preacher, otherwise unknown, a Jean Morcelle, who in the year 1497 had given offence by a sermon on the assumption. By the orders of the Bishop of Paris and of the faculty of theology, he withdrew his theses in the same church in which he had first preached them. We shall quote his third thesis and its censure by the faculty of theology:

The third proposition is: We are not bound to believe under the pain of mortal sin that the Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven, body and soul, because it is not an article of faith.

This proposition, as such, is dangerous, scandalous, contrary to universal belief, marring the splendid devotion of the Christian people to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, false, and heretical (19).

Likewise, those attempts were of a passing nature that were made by Launoi and Tillement in the seventeenth century, and by Natalis Alexander and Marant in the eighteenth. The first two considered the question from a merely historical point of view; Natalis Alexander received a disapproval from his Order, and Marant from the University of Louvain. Suspicions of a historical nature were no longer able to weaken a conviction universally established.

In the nineteenth century, and particularly since the proclamation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, the bodily assumption of Mary has been defended by practically all theologians. At present it is universally accepted that it would be wanton, to say the least, to deny or to combat this doctrine (20). Most theologians declare themselves favorable to the definability of the assumption.

To what extent do the Fathers and the theologians agree?

Much depends on the answer to this question. For, the unanimous teaching of the Fathers and of the theologians in itself is an argument sufficient for the truth of some point or other. To effect such unanimity the following conditions are required:

1. Of the Fathers of the Church. They should agree in the positive announcement of a doctrine; being silent in the mat-

ter or not being contradictory to it is not sufficient; they should speak with complete assurance, that is, they should exclude every doubt concerning the truth of their doctrine; their agreement should refer to matters of faith, that is, they should represent their doctrine as an article of faith.

2. Of the theologians. It is required that their unanimity also be constant, that is, that it continue for several centuries, or at least, for a considerable period; whereas the accordance of the Fathers, even during one generation, is a sufficient argument.

Regarding the Fathers of the Church: from their period some great names can be quoted, for instance, St. Andrew of Crete and St. John Damascene, the two most convinced defenders of the assumption. So far as the existing texts permit us to judge, many others were apparently of the same opinion, for example, St. Gregory of Tours, St. John of Thessalonica, St. Modestus of Jerusalem, and St. Germanus of Constantinople. But it is not clear that they presented a truth which already belonged to the known treasury of faith.

On the other hand, the authority of these great men weighs heavily in the balance, because the doubt, sometimes expressed, sometimes half revealed, is very small, and because these men regarded the doctrine of the assumption as a dogmatic, and not primarily as a historical, question.

Regarding the theologians: apart from Pseudo-Jerome and those who followed him at the time, the dogmatic aspect of Mary's assumption was more and more emphasized. We may wonder if there was a theological unanimity perceptible for centuries that presented Mary's bodily assumption as an absolute and established truth?

St. Peter Canisius said: "As to the matter itself the Church is piously influenced . . ." (21) Thus, in this case, a certain amount of doubt remains.

Suarez explained that "the opinion has been accepted to such an extent that it cannot be called in doubt nor be combatted without temerity by any one pious and Catholic" (22), which was misunderstood by some modern interpreters. Here Suarez did not wish to say that the bodily assumption is absolutely certain, but rather that he who wishes to think as a Catholic, should, in this matter, follow the com-

monly held opinion; such is required by the loyalty to the Church. In addition, when Saurez investigated professedly the degree of certainty of this tenet, he came to the conclusion that the assumption "is so probable that it can come within the latitude of an opinion" or, in other words, that it is most probable.

Benedict XIV took the same point of view as Suarez and wrote: "If it is not an article of faith but a merely pious and probable opinion, might one embrace or deny, maintain or refute it? Certainly not" (24).

The censure commonly used in theology against the denial or combatting of the assumption, reads: "a rash proposition," that is, "one which opposed a doctrine commonly held in the Church, and which cannot be supported by any truly probable reason from elsewhere" (25), that which corresponds to the stand taken by St. Peter Canisius, Suarez, and Benedict XIV.

In this chapter we had planned only to see to what extent the unanimity of the teachings of the theologians went. For, as will be said elsewhere, some were not content with the censure: a rash proposition. To Catharini, the bodily assumption is of faith; to Cardinal Lepicier, of divine and Catholic faith; to others, "a certain and true opinion" (26).

At this point, we wish to indicate an error . . . (for things are best called by their names) . . . made by J. Ernst, who recently thought he had discovered sufficient reasons for creating a positive doubt regarding the bodily assumption. He wrote:

Even those theologians who cover the positive denial and combatting of a doctrinal opinion commonly held by the theologians or of a pious opinion with the censure of rashness, do so with the explicit or implicit reservation: in case this disputing is not based on sufficient reasons (27). As such a sufficient reason for the present freedom from the censure of rashness for the positive doubting of the corporal assumption I have indicated passages in Athanasius, Ambrose, and Augustine, in which these early patristic authorities say that, to date, Christ is the only human who is risen from the dead and is now in the heavenly glory, body and soul (28).

Here we have, Ernst thinks, much more than an argu-

ment from silence. Apparently the Fathers of the fourth and fifth century knew nothing about the bodily assumption of Mary.

Briefly, this reasoning resolves itself into this: Some Fathers of the Church said that Christ alone is risen from the dead and is glorified in body and soul. Consequently it remains forever doubtful, whether, apart from Christ, a second exception to this rule must be accepted.

Now, that the reasoning of Ernst may be conclusive, he should first have to prove that St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine expressed in these particular passages the belief of the universal Church. For, if these passages represent merely a pious opinion, this opinion would have no more authority than the pious opinion of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven. On the other hand, there is nothing more certain than that St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine did not present in these texts an article of faith, since in antiquity the opinion was held that those who with Christ rose from the dead were risen forever (29). Thus, for the Fathers of antiquity also, the question as a whole remained: Is any one other than Christ bodily risen? St. Athanasius and most of his contemporaries did not think of possible exceptions, and regarding the Blessed Virgin they had no explicit tradition, either for, or against (30).

But it is more fitting for us to listen, in this case, to St. John Damascene, who treated this very problem professedly and in detail, and to take into account the ever-growing certainty with which the theologians have expressed their conviction. Lastly we should conform to the principles of Mariology, as they can be found in St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and before them, in St. Irenaeus and in St. Justin.

It remains an unjustifiable method, to play off, in theology, an isolated and totally outdated opinion of three Fathers of the Church against the **consensus scholarum**, the unanimity of the schools, the **lex orandi**, the law of how one must pray, and the **sensus fidelium**, the prevailing notion of the faithful.

CHAPTER 6

The Prevailing Notion of the Church concerning Mary's Assumption into Heaven

Among the pious faithful of the Middle Ages, Mary's bodily assumption was a much-discussed subject. To those holy women whom God had endowed with preternatural gifts the question was repeatedly put, whether Mary was bodily risen and glorified, and their answer was always in the affirmative.

St. Elisabeth of Schonau, who died in the year 1164, related (1) that, obeying the instructions she received from one of her superiors, she asked Mary: "Lady, may it please thee to teach us, if thou hast been assumed into heaven with thy soul alone or with thy body also." She asked this question because the writings of the Fathers are said to leave this point undecided. And Mary answered her: "At present you cannot obtain an answer to your question but someday all this shall be revealed by you."

During that whole year, St. Elisabeth did not dare, for that reason, to go further into this matter, neither with the angel who was her faithful friend nor with Mary herself. But the brother who had urged Elisabeth to ask this question, set her some prayers with which she might obtain the revelation promised by the Blessed Virgin. When a year had passed, and the feast of the assumption returned, St. Elisabeth was suffering from a sickness that lasted for several days. She was lying in bed as the divine Sacrifice was offered, and once more she went into ecstasy during which she suffered heavy pains. There she saw in the distance a tomb wholly enwrapped with light and in the tomb lay the figure of a woman surrounded by a large group of angels. The next moment, this figure rose from the tomb, and the group of angels ascended with the figure into the heavens. When Elisabeth looked upwards, a man resplendent came towards her from the heights of heaven. In his right hand he carried a cross from which a banner was visible, and she understood that our Lord and Saviour was there, accompanied by thous-

ands of angels. With a holy zeal, they led our Lady upwards and carried her with loud songs of praise into the highest heavens . . . At the same time, the angel of the Lord stood beside Elisabeth . . . "Lord," she said to the angel, "what does the vision mean which I saw?" And he answered: "In this vision you were shown how our Lady went to heaven with body and soul." Within the octave following the feast, St. Elisabeth asked the angel what day after Mary's death this bodily resurrection took place. To this question also the angel gave Elisabeth an obliging answer and said: "She died on the day on which her assumption is now celebrated; and forty days later, that is, nine days before the Kalends [first] of October, she rose bodily." The angel added: "The holy Fathers of the Church who introduced the feast of the assumption into the Church, had no certainty regarding the day of her bodily glorification; since they believed without a doubt, in her bodily glorification, they made the day of her death, which they called assumption, a feast day."

Because St. Elisabeth feared to be regarded as an inventor of news, she did not wish to make the news of this revelation known.

Two years later Our Lady appeared to her again, on the feast of her assumption. Elisabeth asked her: "My Lady, shall I make known to the world the revelation concerning thy bodily resurrection?" Mary answered: "The people must not know anything about it, for the times are bad, and they who hear of it, will be caught, as it were, in a trap and will not know how to get out of it." Again Elisabeth asked her: "Shall I destroy the account of this revelation?" And she answered: "This was not revealed to you for destruction nor to forget, but for an increase of my glory with those who love me above all things. For, through you, my friends will hear of it and those who will open to me their hearts, so that they render me a special honor and in return receive from me my special thanks. Great indeed is the number of those who will accept this message with enthusiasm and reverence."

Because of these revelations, Elisabeth and the others in her convent celebrated the stated day of Mary's bodily

assumption as a feast day in the best manner possible, and proclaimed most zealously the praise of their venerable Queen.

During the mystical and divine sacrifice of the Mass, Mary appeared to Elizabeth as she used to do. After Mary had spoken to St. Elisabeth concerning several other matters, Elisabeth asked: "Lady, how long didst thou remain on earth after the ascension of the Redeemer? Were thou assumed into heaven in the year of His ascension?" Mary answered the questions obligingly: "After the ascension of the Lord, I lived in my mortal body on earth a whole year, plus the days counting from the feast of the ascension to the day that my own assumption is commemorated." Again Elisabeth asked: "Were the apostles of the Lord present at thy burial?" And Mary answered: "They were all present and with great reverence consigned my body to the earth."

One day, when the feast of the Annunciation was being celebrated and when our Queen once again made her glorious appearance, Elisabeth ventured to ask Mary how old our Lady was when, after the announcement of the angel, Mary conceived the Word of God in her virginal womb. Our Lady deigned to answer the question as follows: "I was fifteen years old, plus the time from the feast of my birth to the feast of the Annunciation."

From this narration, we can understand the state of mind in the pious circles of the twelfth century. Mary's bodily assumption was not yet known to the Christian people, at least not to a great extent. In the monasteries, the question was discussed and the fact was known that the writings of the Fathers did not all speak in one and the same sense. Urged on by her surroundings, St. Elisabeth tried to obtain an answer from heaven. And the answer she received was: Mary is glorified, body and soul. With regard to the teachings of the Fathers, she was told that the holy Fathers believed, without a doubt, in Mary's bodily assumption; the uncertainty referred only to the day on which this took place. But, again, this detail is revealed to the pious nun, together with many other details regarding the presence of the apostles, Mary's age, and so forth.